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UNDER THE CACTUS FLAG

A STORY OF LIFE IN MEXICO

BY

NORA ARCHIBALD SMITH

Author of "The Ch[illegible]
Douglas Wigg[illegible]
The Story [illegible]

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1899

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Author of "The Children of the Future;" joint author with Kate Douglas Wiggin of "The Republic of Childhood," "The Story Hour," and "Children's Rights."

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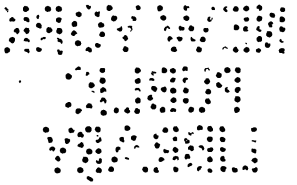

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UNDER THE CACTUS FLAG

CHAPTER I.

IN THE DARK.

In the quiet town of Corona, far to the south of the great western State that basks along the warm Pacific shores, lived little Mary Annesley. She was barely sixteen when this chapter of her story opens, and whatever might have been said of her afterwards, she would scarcely at that time have been selected as a heroine of romance.

Her tresses, when unbound, lacked much of sweeping the ground; her eyes were not of the kind that dazzle the beholder with their brilliancy; nobody had yet likened the pose of her figure to the sway of a lily on its stalk, and her entrance into crowded assemblies had never, so far, provoked general murmurs of admiration.

As for her mental jewels, she could certainly not "jest in ancient Greek," and it

is doubtful if at any age she could have written, as did a sweet girl graduate the other day, a paper on "Singular Solutions of Differential Equations of the First Order in Two Variants, and the Geometrical Properties of Certain Invariants, and Co-Variants of their Complete Privitives."

Yet Mary was a bright girl and a good student, with a very pretty taste for music and an unusual proficiency, for her age, in modern languages; and as for her personal appearance, if she had not the charms of the ladies fair of romance and chivalry, she had at least a straight nose, a sweet, wild-rose color, and brown hair with so satisfactory a natural wave that it put to shame the product of the curling-iron.

Mary was an orphan, yet even here she cannot pose as a heroine in distress, for her parents had died in her early infancy and she had ever since been the welcome charge of her aunt and uncle, the Moores of Glen Ellen, near Corona. Under the friendly shelter of their roof and in the companionship of her cousin Celia, she had never known a day's unhappiness, never felt the cold breath of anxiety, until a year before, the kindly, happy household had suddenly

been called to go down into the Valley of the Shadow with dear uncle Bertram. It was a year ago, — his grave had long been green with softest grass and wreathed with trailing vines; but the little family at Glen Ellen still missed as sorely every day his quick step, his hearty voice, his kindly smile and helpful hand-clasp.

Not only so, but the three women desperately needed his wise counsel and his strong grasp of affairs, for their business matters, as soon as he left them, had straightway fallen into wild confusion, and everybody employed to untangle the skein seemed but to succeed in knotting it more tightly.

Mrs. Moore, who was a semi-invalid, and for whose sake they had come to California, had not been well enough for years to set herself to the task of understanding the various investments her husband had made; the girls were too young to realize anything about money, save that they had always had enough for their simple wants, and in fact, and very naturally too, Mr. Moore had always been Secretary of the Treasury, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Keeper of the Purse, Financial Agent, and General Business Manager of the family at Glen Ellen.

No sooner was he taken away, than every investment that had ever been valuable stopped paying dividends with lightning rapidity, while large assessments were levied on stocks and bonds that, if not profitable in Mr. Moore's lifetime, had at least remained at par. The sheep on the great ranch in the San Ramon mountains were seized with disease, scale appeared on the orange-trees, no purchaser could be found for any property, far or near, and Mrs. Moore might well have been pardoned if she had considered herself a modern counterpart of Job.

Everything had been done of course to lighten the household ship in this stress of weather; servants had been dismissed, horses and carriages sold, Mary and Celia had been cooks and housemaids for some months, but still the situation grew more hopeless.

One evening, when the last post had brought a gloomy letter from the foreman of the ranch, the tradesmen's monthly accounts, a notice that the taxes were due, and a colossal bill from the Los Angeles agent, Mary, with a determined look in her girlish face, knocked at the Dutch door,

cleft horizontally, that divided her own from Celia's room.

"Come in!" called a voice from the window, and Mary, entering, candle in hand, saw her cousin curled up in a great arm-chair, gazing with suspiciously wet eyes on the moonlit garden.

"Dear old Celia!" exclaimed Mary hurriedly, setting down the candle and rushing to take the pretty head on her shoulder; "what made you begin to cry till I came? I could have wept a flood of tears any time this evening, but I did n't mean to let auntie see I was down-hearted, and I counted on mingling my griefs with yours as soon as we came upstairs."

"Oh, Mollie," sobbed Celia, "how discouraging everything looks. What in the world is to become of us?"

"Just what I came in to ask you," said Mary, half laughing; "but really I 've been thinking seriously for a week, dear, and I see that something must be done, though I 'm sure I don't know what. When the bill came to-night from that Los Angeles pirate, — for he is one, if he does n't cruise the high seas, — I made up my mind it was time for desperate remedies. We 've been

pumping water out of this sinking ship long enough, and the time has come to get her to land somehow. In other words, aunt Ellen has n't any money, there is no prospect of her having any for ages, and you and I must just set to work to earn some."

These words of wisdom, punctuated by Mary with sympathizing kisses on the pale cheek resting against her shoulder, were heard by her cousin with some amazement.

"But Molliekin," she exclaimed, "what do we know how to do? Of course I can embroider and paint a little, but it would n't take us long to starve on the prices you can get for even the best fancy-work. I 've learned how to cook pretty well, too, in the last few months, but if I go out to service what becomes of poor mother?"

"You out to service!" cried Mollie disdainfully. "A pretty cook you 'd make, too pretty by far, for the matter of that. But what I 've been thinking of is this. I met somebody in town this morning, — I forget now who it was, who told me Miss Barton wanted another assistant for her decorating. You know you 've helped her with the flowers two or three times when she was crowded with orders, and she has

been enthusiastic ever since over your 'fairy fingers,' as she calls them. I believe the way to success is open for you there, dearie, and Miss Barton would give a little salary from the beginning, I 'm sure."

"Perhaps so," said her cousin half doubtfully. "Anyway it 's work I should thoroughly enjoy, and it 's just like your energy to think first of bringing grist to the mill. I 'm two years older than you and I ought to have taken the initiative, but somehow my mind won't hold a thought of anything but mother now. I watch her patient face hour by hour, and spend all my energies in trying to make up to her part of what she has lost, and when the day is over I don't seem to have strength for original ideas. But what do you propose for yourself, little cousin?"

"Well, various careers have suggested themselves to me in the night watches," answered Mary gravely. "I have thought of being matron of an orphan asylum, but there my comparative youth is against me. . . . I have thought of the stage, but I have so little dramatic ability, . . . and I can scarcely be President of a Woman's College, as yet, anyway. . . . I might get a

position as stewardess on one of the coast steamers, or I might even be a music teacher for young fry, were there not already at least a score of the unfortunates starving in Corona and its suburbs."

"What is the decision then?" asked Celia, who had lifted her head again, somewhat diverted by her cousin's nonsense. "What are you going to try?"

"I really believe languages will be my refuge. I could teach Spanish and French to beginners fairly well. Professor Lemaître thinks I have a good accent in both, you know, and Mrs. Gardiner said not long ago she wished I'd give the twins conversation lessons in Spanish. I don't know. . . . Neither of us seems very useful, considering the amount of money spent on our education, but I 'm perfectly well and you can do a good deal if you 're careful, and it will be a strange thing if we can't support this small family between us."

"It does seem as if we might, and you 're a dear little comforter," agreed Celia; "but we 'll talk it all over with mother in the morning. A spark of courage seems to have warmed my breast since you came in with your candle. But listen, there 's the

midnight bell. Who is to get breakfast if we oversleep? Fly, Mollie, like an angel as you are, and give that brain of yours a little rest."

There were light footfalls in both rooms for a few moments, a rustle of draperies, the gentle closing of blinds and opening of windows, and soon a white-robed figure, with a wavy brown head atop, leaned over the half-door, calling softly, —

"Good-night, ma'mselle the art decorator!"

"Good-night, Professor of Modern Languages," returned Celia. "Bon soir! Schlaf wohl! Dormi felice! Duerme bien!"

CHAPTER II.

A LIGHT APPEARS.

In spite of the midnight conference, the young housekeepers were early astir, and by nine o'clock everything at the cottage was in fairest order, and Mrs. Moore installed in the rose-room with her books and her sewing.

Mary delegated to her cousin the office of communicating to the head of the family the important decision made the previous night, and, basket in hand, set out for Corona with the double purpose of getting the morning's mail, and of finding something both cheap and toothsome for dinner.

As for the mail, it seldom held anything nowadays save troubles and anxieties, with perhaps an occasional letter from an amiable relative, hoping that "dear Ellen was better," and that "their cloud of adversity would soon show its silver lining." Still, even troublesome letters have to be read, and a walk to the Corona post-office twice a

day was part of life's routine for the two girls.

It was a late autumn morning, but seasons are so little noted in Southern California that it might have been springtime, or midsummer, or midwinter, for that matter, save that the road was dusty and the wild flowers not in bloom. Carnations and roses and heliotropes and fuchsias were blossoming in every garden, the lawns were fresh and green, and the only hint of the close of the year lay in the size and color of the ripening fruit on the boughs that shaded the sidewalk.

Mary paid little heed to any of these things, nor even to the morning bloom on her beloved San Ramon mountains; she walked with a quick step, and her gaze was turned inward, facing for the first time a few of life's difficult problems.

She passed the Gardiner twins, but regarded them with so cool and speculative an eye, as if measuring their aptitude for conjugating verbs, or something of that nature, that the commonly irrepressible youngsters hung back a little, and refrained from precipitating themselves upon her as usual. She crossed the road in front of the semi-

nary, to gaze upon that august building and wonder how she would look, in twenty years or so, throned in Professor Lemaître's chair, with a pair of spectacles on her nose.

She visited the market as in a dream, confused herself by saying Bon jour to the butcher, and displayed much less than her ordinary ability in doing the day's purveying. Probably she visited the post-office afterwards, but she did not recall having done so, till on the homeward road, while she was receiving the plaudits of Corona on the success of a French comedy given by her future pupils, she caught her foot in a loose board of the sidewalk, stumbled, dropped her basket, and saw a shower of letters scattered on the ground.

As she picked them up, she noticed that one was addressed to her in Miss Barbara's handwriting, — beloved Miss Barbara, who had been her Spanish teacher, and who had married and left Corona the year before. No, she could n't wait until she got home, she must open it now; and she sauntered along the sunny walk, dappled with the myriad leaf-shadows above, and read as she walked.

The first page made her breath come

more quickly; at the second, her color rose and her eyes dilated, and at the third, she hurriedly sat down on the church steps with an air as of one who might have dropped in the road, had no support been forthcoming. She read the letter once, she read it twice, and after the third reading grasped her basket and skimmed along her homeward way like a lapwing, or rather, like that more ordinary bird, the road runner.

Yet as she gained the hedge of Osage oranges that guarded Glen Ellen, she slackened her pace, for sudden shocks were dangerous to her aunt, walked soberly down the garden path, hung up her hat, smoothed her hair a little, and sought the rose-room. Aunt Ellen was there, but her work had dropped in her lap, and her eyes were fixed upon the distant mountains as if seeking there her help. She held out her hand for the letters and papers, but heard as she did so, Mary's slightly panting breath, and saw the high color in her cheeks.

"What is the matter, child?" she cried, paling in an instant. "Has anything new happened?"

"No, no, dearest auntie," answered Mary caressingly, "or at least only something

good. I've had rather a wonderful letter. Where is Celia? I want to read it aloud."

"In the kitchen, I think. You were gone rather longer than usual, and I believe she is doing something for dinner."

"Celia, Celia," called Mary's fresh young voice. "Come in here! I want to read you a letter."

"Coming," sounded from the rear of the house, and in a moment the stately Celia appeared, gowned in gingham and a sleeved apron, and bearing a pan of potatoes she was peeling.

She took a high-backed chair, with that Windsor Castle air of hers, as Mary always called it, and going on with her prosaic occupation much as if she had been a princess at her embroidery frame, said composedly, —

"Well, Mollie, here I am. What's the news? Do they want you to take a chair at the State University?"

"No, not yet," answered Mary modestly, "but I've had a remarkable letter from Miss Barbara, and it seems more remarkable still, when you think of our conference last night."

"Miss Barbara," said Mrs. Moore vaguely; "I thought she was married a year ago and went to Mexico to live."

"So she was, so she did," explained Mary. "She is n't Miss Barbara now, of course; she 's Mrs. Vazquez, but I never can remember to call her so. No matter, anyway. You know whom I mean. — Well, it 's no use trying to break it to you gently — she wants me to come to Mexico, to Ceritas, where she lives, and teach a private school, and at a good salary too!"

"Mexico!" cried princess Celia, dropping her knife.

"Mexico!" echoed her mother, fixing her eyes on Mary, as if she rather doubted her sanity.

"Yes, Mexico, dears. See the Mexican stamp, and the address to Corona, California, E. U., — that 's for Estados Unidos, you know. But let me read the letter; and Celia, if you stare at me any longer, your eyes will come out on stalks like a crab's."

"No wonder I stare," retorted Celia. "The spectacle of a snip like you as the head of a private school in Mexico would make a mole stare."

"Well, snip or not," said Mary, who had regained her composure, "she wants me, anyway, and here is the letter."

CERITAS, SONORA, MEXICO,
September 7, 18 —.

MY DEAREST MARY, — Your sad little letter of last June has followed us about in all our summer wanderings, and, with its address almost illegible from so much forwarding, is at last in my hands. I knew of many of your family troubles from other friends, and by the same mail as your letter came one from Professor Lemaître, telling me of the latest developments at Glen Ellen, and saying that he was about to suggest language teaching to you, and would do his best to find you a few pupils.

"Good old thing," observed Mary, parenthetically; "is n't he a pet?"

You know, I am sure, how dear you are to me and how I sympathize with your troubles, and though it is nearly four months since I wrote you, yet you have constantly been in my heart and on my mind. If I were in Corona, I know I could help you in many ways, but it may be, strangely enough, that here my help will be even more effectual.

A number of the well-to-do people of Ceritas have long been anxious for a good private school in the town, as the public one is very inferior, and they have at last formed a company to take charge of the enterprise, and have applied to my husband to find a teacher. They particularly

want some one who speaks English, so that the children may get a knowledge of that language while studying the other branches, and since receiving your letter and Professor Lemaître's I have convinced Mr. Vazquez that you are just the person for the place, if Mrs. Moore will let you come.

I know it 's a great distance, though Sonora is one of the border states, but Mr. Vazquez's business is quite certain to keep him in Ceritas a year longer, and you would come direct to us.

"What is his business?" interrupted Mrs. Moore.

"I think he 's a mining engineer," answered Celia. "Mr. Gardiner knows him, and, oddly enough, they were speaking of him yesterday. But go on with the letter, Mollie."

The salary would be fifty dollars a month (continued Mary), and there would be no living expenses so long as we are here. Of course you are very young, still a little girl in many ways, and have had no experience in teaching, but your knowledge of Spanish is unusually good, and I 'm sure you have enough energy and determination to succeed in the management of the school, with my advice and assistance.

You may assure your aunt that we will take

every care of you; the climate of Sonora is beautiful and the life interesting, and I know that the whole experience would benefit you greatly.

Of course there will be many hardships about the journey, the daily living, and the teaching in a foreign language, but in spite of all these things I advise you to come, unless, indeed, some more lucrative position has offered itself in California.

Mr. Vazquez incloses a note with particulars concerning the journey. Talk the project all over with your people, but we must have your answer as soon as possible, for the school should begin by the first of December, at latest.

With kindest regards to your aunt and cousin and dearest love to yourself,

Ever affectionately yours,

BARBARA F. DE VAZQUEZ.

"It's a sweet letter," said Celia reflectively, "but it does seem like a mad project for Mollie, mother."

"Mad, indeed!" Mrs. Moore exclaimed, stretching out her arms to Mary. "Come here to me, kitten, and tell me what you think of it."

Mary, with knitted brow and the open letter in her hand, crossed the room and sank on a stool at her aunt's knee.

"Auntie," she said, "we'll think it all

over carefully, but I 'm afraid it 's a 'leading,' as aunt Easter used to say. It 's a good salary, and with no expenses I could send it all home. There 's very little opening in Corona for me, for I have n't any fashionable specialty like Celia, and perhaps uncle Bertram's insisting on my taking Spanish, when I began at the seminary, is another finger of Fate. Mr. Vazquez says in his note — his name 's Emilio, by the way, and does n't it sound odd? — that there would be about twenty-five children. I feel now that my place is among that 'dusky brood.' I know I shall have to go!"

"Why should n't *I* go?" cried Celia excitedly, dropping a potato in her agitation. "I 'm older than you, and it would be more appropriate."

"Well, in the first place you don't know a word of Spanish except, 'Please pick up my whip,' and 'May I trouble you for a glass of water?' In the second place Miss Barbara does n't ask you, and in the third place I should prove that I was hatched from a veritable cuckoo's egg if I pushed you out of your rightful nest and stayed in it, warm and comfortable myself."

Here Mary's cheeks grew deeper crimson, and her voice gave so suspicious a tremble that Mrs. Moore said hastily, "Go and begin dinner, Celia, dear. Mary and I will have a little quiet talk now, and there 'll be plenty of time for you girls to counsel together this afternoon while I 'm resting."

Celia rose, wafting a finger kiss to her cousin, and as the door closed behind her, Mrs. Moore took Mary's hands in hers, and said gently: —

"Whatever the decision we reach about Mexico, dear child, there must never be any question of this home-nest being less your place than Celia's. I would have shared all I possessed on earth with your mother, and for her sake, as well as for your own, you are so dear that I know no difference between my two daughters. If it should seem best for you to leave us now, it would be because the opening appears suited to you and not to Celia, and we will hope, if you go, that things will brighten so that you need not be long absent."

"Dear aunt Ellen, I want to go for your sake most of all. I cannot bear to see you so troubled and do nothing to help you. No girl ever had a lovelier home than I,

nor dearer people to take care of her, and I want to be like the youngest son in the fairy tales, — I want to go out into the world, to seek my fortune, so that I can bring back every bit of it to you and Celia. But how I am ever going to leave you " . . .

Here there was a sob and a sudden break in the swift-coming words, and Mary buried her face in her aunt's lap.

Silence settled down upon the room, and quite half an hour afterwards, Celia, coming to announce dinner, found Mary in the same attitude, and Mrs. Moore bending above the bowed head with an anxious tenderness like that of a mother-bird dreading the first flight of her nestling.

CHAPTER III.

"ONE TO MAKE READY, AND TWO TO PREPARE."

THE new project, as Mary's prophetic soul had warned her, grew to be considered by every one as indeed one of aunt Easter's "leadings."

Cheerful relatives wrote at once, congratulating "dear Mary on this delightful opportunity for visiting foreign lands," and adjuring "dear Ellen" not to repine at losing her, but rather to be thankful for all her mercies and for this one in particular. To Mrs. Moore, it must be confessed, the special mercy in question shone with a dubious radiance, like unto the moon on a cloudy night, and yet it was so much better than no light at all, that one must perforce be a little thankful for it.

As there was really no good reason to oppose Mary's going, and no one who knew anything of the possible hardships and dangers of the trip; as subsequent letters from

Mr. and Mrs. Vazquez were even more encouraging, and the Los Angeles "pirate" bestirred himself sufficiently (at so much the hour) to find a highly respectable escort, the decision was soon reached, and the youthful pioneer began to make her preparations. These were of necessity very simple, being largely confined to making over two of her aunt's dresses, mending some old ones, buying a pair of new shoes, covering a hat-frame with silk and velvet from the piece-bag, and blacking with Royal Polish a straw sailor for the journey.

Celia mourned over the scantiness of the outfit, but as Mary was no needlewoman, she herself already at work with Miss Barton part of the day, and her mother overtaxed with household duties, there were few hands, even had there been any money, to adorn the victim for the sacrifice. Yet Mary was perfectly content, insisting that she always liked made-over things better than new ones, that the mere presence of three dozen shoe-buttons in her trunk made her feel like one of the Rothschilds, and that her toilets were most satisfactory in view of the fact that all the company she was likely to see in Ceritas was the school-

children and members of the adjacent tribes of Indians.

Sanguine neighbors predicted that she would promptly wed a Mexican mine-owner or capitalist, and come home with rings on her fingers and bells on her toes, but Mary listened to these vaporings with ill-concealed scorn. As the time drew near for leaving, however, she developed a haunting fear that Celia would desert, in her absence, an Old Maids' Sisterhood they had both joined that summer, and she unreasonably fixed upon an elderly gentleman who sometimes came to play duets with the princess, as the chief object of her apprehensions.

"Why, Molliekin, you 're perfectly absurd," exclaimed Celia, as they sat together in the great armchair one evening. "Mr. Pollock is old enough to be my grandfather, and he never has taken anything but a musical interest in me. Why you should think I am going to be plucked from the bough as soon as you leave is more than I can imagine, for there is n't a young man within leagues of the Glen, as far as I know, and if there were, what time should I have for him with the flower work, and the house, and mother? Go to! and don't be silly. I 'll swear

another oath of allegiance to the Sisterhood, if you like, and I 'll paint you a picture of the Old Maids' Hall of the future, that you can take to Ceritas."

"Oh, joy!" cried Mary; "I've always wanted one, and it will be such a comfort. I 'll hang it in my room and gaze upon it whenever I feel apprehensive. I would n't brood over the subject if you were n't so lovely, but I know you 're just the kind of honey that attracts the bees."

"Would 't were true!" sighed Celia, blushing a little. "I assure you I would n't mind some concrete evidence of the fact, but don't worry, dear, you 're perfectly safe. When you come home with a fortune five years hence, your maiden cousin will be the first to welcome you, and she 'll promise to sit by your fireside and live at your expense forever after."

There were many serious as well as gay conversations between the two girls, in the great armchair now, and long, quiet talks with the house-mother, when treasures of spiritual wisdom and tenderness were opened to Mary's eager, seeking heart; while night and day, Sandalphon, the angel of prayer, gathered up the cloud of petitions, each for

all and all for each, that rose from the little cottage.

It was not that Mary's journey and her life in Mexico were likely to be at all dangerous, but the three women had clung more closely to one another since uncle Bertram's death; this was the first separation since that sad time, and Mrs. Moore was always so frail that the unspoken question, "Shall I ever see her again?" trembled every hour of the day behind Mary's close-shut lips.

The last afternoon came, and Mr. Gardiner arrived as the traveler's escort to Los Angeles, having volunteered to accompany her there and deliver his charge in safety that evening to Judge Mason of the Arizona Supreme Court, who was to take charge of her as far as Tontin.

Mary had expressed the intention of arranging her conversation to suit the eminent jurist who had kindly consented to take her under his wing, and had planned to tuck into her bag at the last moment two stray legal volumes, "Bump on Fraudulent Conveyances" and "Chitty on Pleading," which had somehow drifted into Mr. Moore's library.

But none of these things were remembered

when the final wrench of parting came, and Celia stood by bathed in tears, while Mary, her courage at last completely swept from under her, clung to her aunt's neck with the tense grasp of a drowning man.

She had not the physical strength, it seemed to her, to loose her hold; every firm resolve drifted away in the waves of agony closing over her head, and Mr. Gardiner, to cut short the already prolonged suffering, at last unclasped her hands, took her in his arms, and carried her bodily to the carriage.

The journey to Los Angeles was hardly more agreeable to this good Samaritan than to Mary herself, but as she neared the city, she somewhat regained her balance, and so bravely made all her good resolutions over again that when she was introduced that evening to her traveling companion, she was perfectly composed and presentable.

Judge Mason proved to be all that was correct in point of age and grizzled hairs, and disposed to be warm and friendly to his pale, heavy-eyed little charge.

He helped her on the train, assuring her that her berth was already made up, that they would be at Yuma next morning be-

fore she had her sleep out, and that the journey to Tontin was a mere trifle, one that invalids often took for health's sake.

Mary waved her hand to Mr. Gardiner, the train started, stopped, and started again with decision, the engine gave a prolonged howl of despair at leaving lovely California, and the youthful traveler realized, amid the rumble of wheels, the rattle of machinery, and the steady jolt of the cars, that her journey into the world had begun in earnest.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE FRONTIER.

In the first long letter that Mary sent home after reaching Ceritas, she wrote that the journey, like all Gaul, was divided into three parts; that the first was attended with mental distress, in the second, physical anguish was predominant, while to the last spiritual apprehension was added.

This sketch of the trip, though put in humorous fashion, was fairly descriptive of what it must have seemed to a young and tenderly nurtured girl. A strong man, accustomed to rough living, would doubtless have regarded it lightly enough; and in truth it could not be considered perilous, for Mary, though cold, was never frostbitten, though hungry, came nowhere near starvation and, though somewhat dazed for want of sleep, managed to retain her spirits and her courage.

The first night, spent in regal elegance upon a sleeping-car, was indeed a "white

night," both within and without, for the land was flooded with moonlight, and the girl lay for hours propped upon her pillows, the curtains of her berth pinned back, gazing out on the fast-flying panorama of dusky brushwood, of silvered desert, and sudden-rising mountain peak.

The rhythmic tremble of the cars soon set itself to music in her brain, and to the strains she began to dream dreams, and to see sweet visions of the future. These moments of exaltation alternated with periods of depression when the fierce ache in her throat threatened to burst out into sobs, and homesick tears stole from her tired eyes. She was alone, and had no one to consider, so she enjoyed what is sometimes a profound luxury, that of giving full sway to pent-up grief; but Mother Nature had no mind to allow an unlimited expenditure of this nervous force, and when the cuckoo in the hall at distant Glen Ellen had caroled three times for the coming day, Mary was wrapped in the dreamless sleep of a tired child.

When at last the travelers crossed the brown, swirling flood of the Colorado, the morning was well advanced, and by that time she had met the other members of

Judge Mason's party, and found, much to her disappointment, not a woman amongst them.

One was a young physician going down to settle in Tontin; one a capitalist, seeking mining investments, and, the last to be presented, a delicate lad of perhaps eighteen years, sent to Arizona to ward off consumptive tendencies. They were all perfectly courteous to Mary, but did not appear to look upon her addition to the party as a matter for exuberant gayety, each one seeming to cherish the inward conviction that she would be a great deal of trouble, the brunt of which was likely to fall on his own devoted shoulders.

As they stepped from the cars at Yuma, the judge exclaimed with apparent heartiness, "Again my feet press with gladness the sacred soil of Arizona!" but his words were unheeded in the chorus of ejaculations that followed the first view of the town and its surroundings. Mary and Jack Martin exchanged pathetic glances, drawn together at once by the comradeship of youth, and confided to each other afterwards that they distinctly felt at the moment a series of cold shivers run down their respective backbones.

"Is this lazy, muddy stream the wonderful Colorado?" cried the doctor.

"Are there any more towns in the Territory like this?" asked the capitalist, with a hasty backward glance at the car.

"You'll see the time," replied the judge grimly, "when you'll look back to Yuma as the children of Israel did to Egypt. But we must n't stand talking here when breakfast is in prospect. Come, child," turning to Mary, "you must be almost famished. Here is the coach, and we can view the landscape as we go."

At this moment appeared to Mary's fascinated gaze the first specimen of the red man of romance that she had ever seen. The breezes played freely about his noble legs, while a short jacket covered the upper part of his figure. Like the maiden's in the song, "loose were his jetty locks, in wavy tresses flowing," but he appeared to be in great haste, and vanished at a jog trot around a turn in the embankment before he could be examined to advantage.

"Those fellows are wonderful runners," said the judge, gazing approvingly at the swift pace. "We used to employ them as messengers here in Arizona, and they could

travel fifteen miles an hour at that gait without apparent fatigue. There was an old Apache servant of mine, Bat-to-chee-sha (the coyote), they called him, who" — But the end of the story was never heard, for at that moment the coach drew up at the "Grand Hotel," a low yellow-washed adobe building, whose piazza was dotted with lounging men.

With one accord, these worthies shifted their positions a trifle, and fixed their gaze upon Mary with such intensity that she nervously put her hand to her head, fearing that she had lost her hat, or that her mop of curly hair was coming down. Reassured on these points she ascended the steps with a suggestion of Celia's "Windsor Castle air," and followed a servant to her room.

The apartment into which she was ushered boasted no window, but a plenitude of doors, one of them, half of glass, set slightly open into a side yard, through which the sunlight streamed so bravely, and the air blew so crystal-clear and bracing, that no one save a confirmed pessimist could have withstood their entreaty to be gay.

Mary perched on the bed a moment to view her new domain, and as she was wondering when the floor had been swept last,

and to whom the clothes in the corner belonged, a flannel-shirted individual walked in from the yard without the formality of knocking, surveyed her with some interest, and strolled through the opposite door.

Breakfast was called at this moment, followed by a rush of feet down the hall like a stampede at a fire, and Mary, separated from the judge by several places, had no opportunity at the moment to confide to him this first experience of frontier manners.

As they were rising from the meal, the doctor leaned over to say that they were all going out to see the town, and she must put on her hat at once and accompany them. She hurried to her room, intending to make herself a bit more presentable, and had scarcely donned a dressing-sacque, when another man popped his head in at the glass door, but withdrawing it at once, remarked to some one outside that he guessed the young lady was a-fixin' herself.

Apparently repenting his cowardly retreat, he at once returned, saying apologetically that he 'd like to come in and get his boots if she did n't mind, — he an' his pardner hevin' been kind o' usin' that room to dress in for some time back.

Its astounded occupant raised no objection, but begged he would wait a few moments until she had finished her toilet. This was naturally hurried through, and locking her traveling-bags she ran out and almost into Judge Mason's arms, as he stood waiting for her on the sidewalk.

"Dear sir," she panted, "I 'm really not at all fussy, and I don't mean to be a bit more trouble than I can help, but something will have to be done about my room. Why, it is n't a room at all — it 's a thoroughfare, and there have been three men in it already!"

"Bless my soul!" cried the judge. "Where can they have put you? They 're not accustomed to young ladies down here, and that lout of a boy probably showed you in at the first open door. Never mind, we 'll take our walk now, and when we get back I 'll find you a decent corner in the house, if it 's the bridal chamber. Have you brought your money with you and locked your bags? Yes? All right then. Come on, Jack." (This to young Martin, who was lingering in the rear.) "Here 's a maiden fair, awaiting your escort."

The lad joined them with a flush of plea-

sure on his hollow cheeks, and Mary, walking by his side, felt many a sympathetic pang, as she noted his gaunt figure, and wondered how roughing it on the frontier could be considered a specific for such evident ills.

Although the second week in November had already passed, yet the Arizona sun still shone with considerable vigor, and the glare from the white shadeless roads was intense. To the judge's unconcealed satisfaction, all the travelers remarked on the clearness of the atmosphere, and on the dry, exhilarating air that seemed to tune the nerves to concert pitch. Jack already felt better, he said, and as he held Mary's parasol, became very chatty and confidential, telling her of his father and sisters, of his first year at college (poor lad! it was likely to be his only one), of his dogs and horses, and his achievements in athletic sports.

Mary, it may be supposed, was not a whit behind in this dialogue, and when the excursion was over, it was certainly no fault of hers if Jack was not qualified to recognize aunt Ellen and Princess Celia in any assembly, however crowded.

The little party was first conducted by

the judge up the hill to the penitentiary, a massive building guarded by white cliffs on the one side, and on the other, down a precipice, by the Colorado River. The keeper, who did the honors of the institution, proved to be an affable person with great conversational powers, and such full and unsavory particulars were imparted by him of the history of the prisoners, some of the most desperate, hardened criminals of the border, it appeared, that the younger members of the company soon wandered away.

The hill was covered with fragments of rock of all sizes and, as the judge called to them, by and by, that opals had several times been found there, considerable groping and fumbling began at once among the broken pieces. The exercise proved exhausting in that temperature, however, and Mary and Jack contented themselves with some agates which would serve as mementoes of the journey.

"If you came here in summer," said the judge as they left the penitentiary, "you 'd be likely to find these gates wide open, and most of the prisoners working in and about the yard with a very small guard. They

don't need one, Heaven knows; the awful deserts that stretch away from here for one hundred and fifty miles in three directions, and the cactus and the rattlesnakes on that sandy waste across the river, are all the guards that are required. In fourteen years only one man has escaped, and he was a poor half-breed who by the time he got down into Mexico was a raving maniac from hunger and thirst. There are too many stories current of horrible suffering out among the cactus and the sand-hills in Arizona for a convict even to think of escape."

"It 's a horrible, forbidding place anyway," said the doctor. "One of the guards told me that no one knows what these poor fellows suffer in summer. Fancy being locked for ten hours every night in a stone cell four by eight feet, with a temperature of 105° to 107°! I tell you, Arizona is one spot, at least, where the wicked do not flourish like a green bay-tree."

"It 's dreadful to think of," said Mary with a distressed sigh; "it was uncomfortably hot up there even to-day."

"Here are some brethren that don't complain of the heat much," said the judge,

and up the hill came a company of Indians, taking the air together, the squaws with their roughly painted faces and gaudy red blankets carrying round-eyed papooses strapped to their backs. The braves stalked along beside them, in unincumbered dignity, attired in their short jackets and red flannel loin-cloths, their shining coppery legs sometimes dappled, like a leopard's, with white painted spots. Neither the masculine nor the feminine costume seemed appropriate to the climate, the one being as much too warm as the other appeared too cool, and the appearance of the whole group was so startlingly like the pictures in a story-book that Jack said he almost expected to hear the accompanying war-whoops and the whiz of the tomahawks.

As they neared the river bank another novel figure met their gaze, for down the tumbling waters, on a raft of logs which he managed with a long pole, came a really splendid savage. He was naked, save for the heavy, tossing locks of his black hair and his red sash that floated out behind him like a banner. Tall, brown, muscular and sinewy, balancing himself and guiding his rebellious craft down the swift current with

perfect skill and grace, he was so fine a specimen of athletic manhood that the party watched him with delight until he disappeared, Jack greeting his exit from the scene with a toss of his cap and as good a sample of his college yell as his weak lungs permitted.

Arrived at the hotel Judge Mason sought better accommodations for Mary, and finally installed her, as he had suggested, in the bridal chamber. This was adorned with a carpet and a red plush sofa, and was lavishly provided with doors and French windows, though fortunately all had bolts so large as to give some feeling of security. It was subsequently found that the apartment was the only drawing-room of the hotel, and Mary shared it during the afternoon with a considerable variety of single persons and stray couples, varying in number from two to eight at a time.

This afforded an unexampled opportunity to study the dress, manners, and language of the frontier, but Mary, as she wrote her first home letters in this mixed assemblage, thought that social studies were not so much to her taste, at the time, as a few quiet hours of retirement would have been.

"Do you think they 'll go at bedtime?" she anxiously inquired of the judge, slipping out on the piazza. "I don't mind so much now, but I can't say I fancy the prospect of sitting up all night, particularly with that one-eyed desperado on the sofa glaring at me."

"What desperado?" asked the judge, laughing. "Oh, you mean that fellow in the felt hat? Why, he 's a rancher near here, and as mild as milk. But don't you trouble your pretty head — they 'll all go out after supper; if they don't they shall be put out, and if you say so I 'll do it now," rising from his chair with alacrity.

"Oh, no!" cried Mary nervously, remembering that she had heard frontiersmen were very "handy" with their weapons when offended. "No, indeed; I 'm doing very well now, if I can only hope to have my room to myself for the night. There 's nothing like travel for enlarging the mind, and I might as well have all the new experiences I can get. No, pray keep your seat, Mr. Martin, — thank you. I can't come out now, I'm busy writing."

The various occupants of the bridal chamber did indeed depart when the dusk began

to fall, and Mary retired early, carefully slipping all the bolts, barricading the long windows with bureaus and tables, rolling the washstand against one door, and building a monument of chairs against the other. This defense accomplished, she sought her couch, and fell asleep at once in spite of the fact that a score of men were talking on the porch almost at her ear, and an Indian circus procession, with rattling drums and tooting horns, was parading the streets.

All was dark and still, however, when hours afterward she was wakened from sweetest dreams of home by the sound of a pistol-shot apparently fired at her door.

She sat up in bed, her heart beating a réveillé against her side, but nothing followed save loud voices, quick movements, and some confusion in the next room. In a few moments there was a tap at her door, and the judge called out reassuringly, "Don't be frightened, Miss Annesley; there 's nothing at all the matter. One of the fellows in the next room is in rather high spirits to-night and has been making a target of his bureau. They 've pitched him out into the corral now, and taken away his gun. You 're all right. Good-night."

"All right indeed!" thought Mary, as she sank back on her pillows. "Well, perhaps I am; but, shades of my ancestors! what would they think of this at Glen Ellen?"

CHAPTER V.

AN ARIZONA STAGE RIDE.

"STRANGE all this difference should be
'Twixt tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee,"

— quoted Dr. Culver next morning, as the little canvas-covered Tontin stage jolted up to the hotel steps; "compare this trap with the stagecoach of romance, the stagecoach of adventure, the gallant vehicle, with its prancing steeds, that Dick Turpin stopped, and Beau Brocade rifled."

"This kind of an outfit 's jest ez handy to rob ez any other kind," remarked a saturnine bystander, "and don't you forgit it when you git out here on the desert a piece! The art o' stage-robbin' ain't one o' the lost arts in *this* country, anyhow."

"Our friend is reassuring," murmured Jack Martin, helping Mary to her place. "There 's nothing like starting on a journey with pleasant anticipations. But don't you worry, Miss Annesley," as he took his seat beside her; "we 've all got revolvers, and we 'll take care of you among us."

"Fiddlesticks with your revolvers!" cried the judge. "This stage has n't been held up for a year; the road agents are all in the penitentiary, and the Apaches are on their reservations learning to knit and crochet. If Miss Mary can live through a seventy-two hours' continuous ride, she can afford to laugh at the thought of highway robbers."

"Particularly," said Mary gayly, "as all her money is in the judge's pocket. But dear me! what a tight fit we are for this vehicle! I wonder if it 'll stretch as we go on."

"Probably not, but my prophetic soul tells me that we shall shrink," laughed Jack. "Don't you want my rug behind you, Miss Annesley, and could n't you use one of my bags for a footstool?"

"Keep your rugs for yourself, Jack," said the judge. "I 'll make this lassie so comfortable that she 'll think she 's in her own armchair at home."

This innocent speech, so kindly made, flew to Mary's heart like an arrow. As by a flash-light she saw the great armchair in Celia's window, and her cousin and herself curled up there in the soft dusk, for one of their never ending talks. Her lip trem-

bled, and she bent to arrange her shawl-strap, to hide the tears that rushed to her eyes. But no one noticed her momentary distress, for the stage had started, and all were occupied in efforts to arrange their effects as best they might, and to make their hard seats a trifle less uncomfortable.

Though only twenty-four hours had passed since Mary had joined the party, yet the disinclination, at first so apparent, to receive her amongst them had quite disappeared, unless some traces of it still remained with the capitalist, who was a reserved and silent person.

But the little maid had already shown herself so cheery, so plucky, as the judge called it, so considerate and so resolved to make the best of everything, that she positively shed a light upon the stagecoach, and the doctor vowed that he began to believe the journey would prove, in Samanthy Allen's parlance, a veritable "pleasure-exertion."

Yet it is not to be supposed that she was not, with all her efforts, an incumbrance in some respects, and the cause of a little extra trouble, but her companions proved themselves to be really of a chivalrous spirit by

sharing all their traveling conveniences with her, even, in spite of remonstrance, making her use some things they really needed, and bearing the consequent discomfort with heroic spirit. If they found her in the way, no one of them by word, or look, ever made it known, while the judge hovered about her like a hen with one chicken, and Jack was another Raleigh in gallantry and devotion. Truly, the little pilgrim had reason to be thankful for the kindly hands stretched out to aid her at the outset of her journey. She might have fallen among very different companions, and had serious trials to endure in addition to the fatigue, the heat and cold, the loss of sleep, and aching bones which would have been her portion in any case.

The stage had not traveled as far as Filibuster, the dinner station, before Dr. Culver had shown her his wife's miniature painted on ivory and mounted in a marvelous velvet case, while the judge told her shortly afterward all about his wonderful boy at Harvard, closing by saying that it was his intention to take her directly home with him when they reached Tontin, to rest until she heard from her friends at Ceritas. He should telegraph Mrs. Mason to that effect

when they were within a day of their destination, and she need not protest, for he had her fast in his clutches.

Mary had no thought of protesting, nor indeed of anything save gratitude, and with a heart warmed by all this friendliness, listened subsequently with flattering attention to Jack's account of a camping trip in the Yosemite the previous summer.

The capitalist made no confidences, but he eyed her in a kindly manner, and at dinner, seeing that she did not bemoan the absence of milk in her coffee, said that her wooden stool was quite comfortable, and made no objection to a two-pronged steel fork, he observed gravely that it must have been a sensible woman that brought her up.

This tribute was accepted by Miss Annesley with becoming modesty, and stored away in her memory for her beloved aunt Ellen, whose practical merits as a trainer of youth it decidedly understated.

The clear-eyed, blazing Arizona sun had not dropped out of sight that first evening before, upon one of the travelers at least, the strange charm of the desert had stolen. The shimmering sky-line, the pale, sparkling sand, the gray-green of the sage-brush, the

ash-colored masses of rock rising abruptly from the dead level, and fluted and twisted into pillars and domes and spires, the giant cactus lifting beseeching arms high in air, the sunset light on the distant peaks, purple, mysterious, ineffable, — all these were so many strange details of this landscape, half beautiful and half sinister. Here was no ordinary, comfortable prettiness of sparkling water, of verdure and flowers, but the beauty of free air and illimitable space, of pale, faint tints in growing things, of severe outlines, cliffs painted in ashes of roses, and blue, jewel-like depths of sky.

While the doctor inveighed against the alkali dust, Jack complained of dazzled eyes, and the capitalist growled at the general desolation, Mary leaned against her canvas curtain and looked out, out, far out across the miles of distance as vague, as uncertain, as mysterious as the future she was journeying to meet.

The judge, being an old traveler, filled his rubber pillow with air, and placing it in divers curious positions snatched occasional cat naps which he pronounced most refreshing, though while taking them he appeared to the rest of the company to be

enduring great suffering. He wasted no time on the scenery, which was not only too familiar to be interesting, but too painfully associated in his mind with pioneer experiences, — with hunger, burning thirst, blinding heat, and days of footsore travel.

At Sahuaro, the supper station, so called from the many specimens of organ-pipe cactus growing near, he drew Mary's attention to a splendid giant, whose fluted trunk rose thirty feet in air and whose great arms spread out each side like a monster candelabrum.

"Stop a minute, Jack," he cried as they left the sahuaro, "and we 'll have some fireworks in honor of Miss Annesley, the Fair Maid of the Desert."

There was a silvery cactus, or cholla, growing near, its branches covered with innumerable shining spines, and to this he applied a lighted match. In a moment the whole plant was in a blaze, and as it burned, snaps, pops, and reports were heard like an immense package of firecrackers all going off at the same time. Mary beat a retreat, laughingly declaring that she could not bear the weight of her honors, and entered the supper-room followed by miniature sal-

vos of artillery still discharging from the cholla.

A strong family likeness existed among all these hostelries on the desert, the only difference lying in the rich fancy lavished upon their names and the greater or less degree of their dirt and bareness. They were always built of adobe, or sun-dried brick, the dining-rooms were floored and walled with earth, the table was invariably two boards stretching down the middle of the apartment, and was generally covered with oil-cloth, and the seats were long benches or wooden stools. Women were seldom seen at any of them, napkins were never provided, and such artificial luxuries as dressing-rooms had not yet been thought of.

While the gentlemen strolled about and smoked after the rough meals, Mary sought some distant cactus, and hanging her traveling mirror to its thorns shook out her tumbled gown, brushed her wavy locks, and afterwards generally managed to find a tin basin of water which she could set on a bench by the door and use for completing her toilet. The judge declared that the way she kept up her fashionable appearance was a positive marvel, but Mary could only

groan in spirit as she wondered what Celia would think of her swollen lips, cracked with the alkali dust, of the wrinkles in her skirt, the holes in her gloves, and the sad condition of her poor old hat, whose coat of Royal Polish was ill calculated for such a journey.

The first night was a martyrdom of fatigue, of aching bones, of chilliness, for the cold was sharp when the sun had set, of sudden jolts, when the drowsy head came in abrupt contact with the sides of the stage, of slipping about on the hard seats, and finally, when the horses stumbled, of a swift collapse in a heap to the bottom of the vehicle, from which humble position she was extricated by the judge, who said she reminded him of a pea in a hot skillet.

As she was recovering from this last mishap the darkness began to lift, and her kindly guardian suggested in a low voice that as they were about to change horses she should climb up on the driver's seat, and see an Arizona sunrise.

The prospect of change was welcome, and Mary, so numb with fatigue that she could hardly keep her feet, made her way over her sleeping companions, and was assisted

by the weather-beaten driver to a place by his side. Her companionship was evidently hailed with delight; she was tucked under blankets and wolf-skins, and comforted by the new position, by the rush of free air and the brightening daylight, she returned to her own cheery, sensible self, remembering with the Psalmist that weeping indeed may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

"This yer first trip over the desert?" asked her companion, looking with some curiosity at the blue eyes, round cheek, and dimpled chin beside him.

"It's my first trip anywhere. I'm — what was it Judge Mason called it? Oh, yes, I'm a 'tenderfoot.'"

"Wal, I guess you be sure enough, but you're a rustler too, I bet, or you would n't be takin' *this* trip. — Goin' to yer folks in Tontin?"

"No, I'm going to Mexico. — Oh, look, the sun's just rising! See how pink it is over there. Oh, how beautiful, how beautiful!" cried Mary, clasping her hands in her fervor.

"'T is a handsome sight," agreed the driver, "though there ain't many ter see it.

It's kind o' lonesome an' deserted on this road, yer see, tarnation cold in winter, hot in summer, an' dry an' dusty all the year. There's times when I'd give all the sunrises an' sunsets that ever was for a night in bed like a Christian."

Probably Mary would have sympathized with the very natural feeling if she had heard its expression, but she was deaf and blind to everything but the glory of the coming day. They were descending from a high plateau to a valley set round about with mountain peaks which the sun was painting now with his own precious gold. The road unrolled below them like a silver ribbon, half lost in shadow at the other side of the valley, the sky was flushed with a tender rose, and on the hard dry ground the feet of the horses clattered a merry greeting to the morning freshness and the return of the "sun and comforter." Not until he leaped dazzling above the horizon and became his ordinary self again did Mary think of conversation, and find out suddenly, as she confided to the driver, that she was as hungry as a Siberian wolf. There was only an hour to breakfast, he said, and this interval was employed in learning which were

the "off" horses and which the "nigh" ones, in hearing an account of a stirring fight when the stage was "held up" the previous year, and finally, to her delight, in finding out that the driver had worked on a ranch in the San Ramon Mountains a few years before, and had often seen her uncle Bertram.

At Brandy City, Jack, very pale and haggard, poor fellow, helped her down from her perch, and the doctor, unrolling himself from his rugs, gallantly observed that she looked like the rosy-fingered Dawn, which remark was really no more poetic than it was true, for Mary was gloveless and her hands considerably reddened by cold and exposure.

Breakfast proved a welcome tonic, and the spirits of the party were so much refreshed that they improvised a "comb orchestra" during the morning, and buzzed gayly along for many miles. The driver, openly interested, thrust his head in at the stage door to ask the judge what kind of an outfit he had in there ("outfit" being an Arizona term covering everything from a baby to a threshing-machine), and opined subsequently that comb-music was a blamed sight better 'n none.

Dinner at Hang Town was as forbidding as its name, proving to be one of those meals in which, as Sydney Smith once said, everything is sour but the vinegar and everything cold but the water. As there is commonly an intimate connection between nourishment and cheerfulness, the spirits of the party waned perceptibly during the afternoon. Mary's merry tongue was silent, and a violent attack of homesickness took possession of her. Jack was very quiet also, and regarded her with wistful sympathy, exerting himself, after a time, to improvise an ingenious contrivance from a shawl and an umbrella to keep the sun out of her eyes.

When this was in place, he leaned back in his seat, looking so white and weary that Mary inwardly reproached herself for selfishly giving way to her feelings, and resolved to turn over a new leaf at once.

At the supper station, where they changed horses, a slight ripple of excitement was observable, and upon inquiry it proved that a gentleman of hasty temper had just shot a friend there in the heat of argument. This news in itself was rather discouraging to appetite, and Mary, after one hasty glance at the floor, the table, and the man who was

bringing in the dishes, slipped quietly from the room and fled behind the hut, where she sank on the sun-baked ground, and, overpowered with fatigue, loss of sleep, and nervousness, forgot all about that new leaf and wept a good many bitter tears.

When the shower was well over, however, she dried her eyes, adjusted her dress, and strolling toward the stage with the manner of one without a care, suddenly came upon poor Jack Martin, whom she had entirely forgotten, reclining on the chopping-block, eyes closed and head thrown back on the wood-pile.

"Why, you selfish little wretch," cried Mary to herself, — "you that are well, to go off and cry and leave that poor boy to suffer alone! I 'm ashamed of you."

"Mr. Martin," she called, hurrying to his side; "are you feeling ill? can't I do something for you?"

"Not ill, — just a bit — faint," said the lad in gasps.

Miss Annesley, even at this early age, was nothing if she was not prompt and decided, and before five minutes had passed she had dragged Dr. Culver from his supper, learning that nothing serious was the

matter, only over-fatigue and probably want of nourishment, had applied to the capitalist for crackers, of which she knew he had a store, had ordered fresh tea to be made, with so peremptory an air that it came as if by magic, and armed with a can of deviled ham which mysteriously appeared, she sat on the other side of the chopping-block and fed her patient with a truly motherly air.

Her remedies proving wonderfully effective, she prescribed some of the same for herself, and when at dusk they were all in the stage again, and Judge Mason had propped her with pillows and swathed her in rugs, she did, — yes, — she cer—tain—ly did feel — a — lit—tle — bit — slee—, . . . and she knew no more till midnight.

The next morning they whiled away with Twenty Questions, guessing successively the "Breeches Bible," George Washington's cocked hat, the portrait of Anne of Cleves sent to Henry the Eighth, the left eyebrow of the Venus of Milo, and the tail of the dog of the child of the wife of the Wild Man of Borneo.

In the afternoon they rolled by a series of Indian villages with their low mud huts, the squaws carrying baskets to and fro on their

heads, naked, brown-skinned babies tumbling on the ground, and young girls, with brilliantly painted faces and fringes of black hair covering their eyebrows, staring under curved palms at the loaded stage.

There was another night of clattering hoofs, of rumbling wheels, of snapping whip and drivers' calls, of jolt and jar, of slip and bruise, of numbness and cold, of restless naps and sudden wakings, of a general atmosphere of nightmare and unreality, and they rolled at last into the dusty streets of Tontin, and their journey was over.

So completely exhausted was Mary by long travel and want of sleep, so weary and aching in every bone, that she could scarcely have told you afterwards whether she bade adieu to her companions on leaving the stage, whether she walked or drove to the judge's door, whether or not he carried her up the steps, and whether she gave the greeting that propriety demanded to lovely Mrs. Mason, who came hurrying to meet them.

There certainly was a sweet womanly somebody, who called the judge her dearest Rufus, who welcomed Mary warmly, suggested bath and sleep at once, conducted her to a fresh, quiet room with a bed like a

drift of white roses, lowered the shades, and bade her sleep till night if she could.

Mary accepted all these kind offices as in a dream, made ready for bed, half stupefied with drowsiness, and only had time to give one swift thought to Glen Ellen, say one brief word of thanksgiving for the first stage of her journey completed, when sleep descended upon her suddenly, heavily, as an eagle swoops down from the sky.

Not the shadow of a dream troubled those slumbers, and Mrs. Mason, peeping in at the door when the vesper bells were ringing, saw the little maid just awakened, leaning back upon her pillows, and looking about her with bewildered gaze as if saying, like the old woman in the rhyme: —

"Lawks a massy on me,
Can this be I?"

CHAPTER VI.

A BREATHING SPACE.

"THE Seven Sleepers," remarked the judge next morning at breakfast, "Maximian, Malchus, Martinian, Dionysius, John, Serapion, and Constantine, went to bed in 250 A. D. and slept sweetly till the year 479. I mention this merely as a matter of general interest, ladies, and not of course because it has any personal application."

"Nonsense, Rufus," cried his wife, laughing. "Miss Annesley sha'n't be likened to Serapchus or Maltiminian or any of those unpronounceables. She slept most of yesterday and all last night because she was tired out and her conscience was good, and see the effect in her color this morning."

"Oh, don't say Miss Annesley," pleaded the girl. "I feel as if no one had called me Mary for years. Please do, you and the judge, while I 'm here."

"'Call me Daphne, call me Chloris,
Call me Lalage or Doris,
Only, only call me thine!'"

quoted the judge with passionate emphasis, helping his guest to steak.

"Don't mind him, Mary," patting the girl's hand. "He evidently rose early to read Bartlett's 'Familiar Quotations,' and he 's such a frontiersman now that he would probably have called you Mary to-day and Polly to-morrow, without any encouragement."

"I 'm perfectly willing to call her mine any day," said the judge. "I wish she belonged to us and we 'd have her bright eyes to light the house while the boy is away. Would n't he enjoy her, eh, wife?

"And by the way, my dear," turning to Mary, "not only Dr. Culver and Jack Martin, but those other gallant fellows, all four of them, called especially to see you last night."

"To see me?" in blank amazement. "Why, what for, and how did they know I was here?"

"You don't know yet what a rarity a young lady is in these parts," said Mrs. Mason. "There 's not an unmarried man in the county, between the ages of eighteen and forty, who won't know by to-morrow night that there 's a blue-eyed little girl

from California, staying at the judge's in Tontin. But how do you like the house, my dear? Don't you think we manage to make ourselves comfortable on the desert?"

Mary's appreciative eyes had already noted the fine proportions of the room, the deep window-seats, the soft carpet and curtains, and the dainty breakfast-table, and had admired the night before the drawing-room with its pictures and books, its harp and piano. She said now, and said truly, that she thought the house beautiful, as far as she had visited it, and that it seemed even more charming in contrast with the unpromising, flat-roofed buildings she had seen from her window that morning.

"Take her out to see the town, this morning, Mattie," said the judge as he rose from the table, "and if you want the horses in the afternoon, I 'll speak to Larry as I go out. I cannot be at home before five o'clock, I fear," looking at his watch.

"Oh, please wait just a moment, sir," said Mary timidly. "I don't want to trouble you, but I feel as if I ought to arrange to go to Ceritas at once. I promised to be there the first of December, you know, and" —

The judge took her hands in his.

"My dear child," he said, "you're not going to Ceritas until your friends come for you. You can write in a few days and tell them you're here, but we want you to stay with us and make a little visit first. If you're so eager to begin teaching, you can give young Martin Spanish lessons. I promised his father I'd keep him out of mischief while he was here. Now don't worry, little girl, and have a good time to-day. Good-by, sweet wife," and he closed the door behind him.

"No indeed, Mary," added Mrs. Mason eagerly, "you are not to say another word, for now we know you we can't think of letting you go for a month anyway. They can't miss in Ceritas what they've never had, and we are so lonely in my boy's absence that it will be sweet to have a child in the house again. Now can you amuse yourself for half an hour, while I do some housekeeping? and then we'll go out and see the town."

It was after ten o'clock when Mrs. Mason called her guest, but the intervening time had not all been spent in looking over the books and trying the piano, for in Mary's

pocket as they went out, lay a sealed envelope neatly addressd to

Señora Doña
Barbara F. de Vazquez,
Ceritas, Sonora,
Mexico.

When the door was closed upon Judge Mason's house, it differed in no respect, so far as the front was concerned, from a dozen others in the block. It was a long, low, flat-roofed dwelling, of the packing-box order of architecture, built of adobe bricks which had been plastered and tinted a pale yellow.

An adobe wall, fully eight feet high, began at the corner of the house and encircled it at the rear, where from the broad veranda, with its rugs and hammocks, could be seen the stables, a diligently tended grass-plot, and a few struggling trees.

Nothing of all this could be noted from the street, and Mary remarked, as they walked briskly along, lifting their skirts from the white dust, that the houses were as tantalizing as a row of books with unlettered backs.

They met a few elderly Mexican women, their black shawls drawn tightly over their

heads and shoulders, a Jesuit priest in a long, flapping cassock, reading his breviary as he walked, and as they neared the business portion of the town, a tall, slender lad hurried across the street to intercept them, and breathlessly expressed his pleasure at the meeting.

"Are you going to show Miss Annesley the town, Mrs. Mason?" he asked. "May I come too? Shall I be in the way?"

"Not at all, Mr. Martin. We should be delighted to have you, should we not, Mary? There, children, there 's your first sight."

At this moment four mouse-gray, fuzzy, white-nosed, long-eared, serious little donkeys came slowly up the street, driven by a Mexican in snow-white shirt and trousers, and broad felt hat.

Each patient little beast was loaded with sticks of wood, piled in a mountain far above his back, and fastened under his pack-saddle with straps and strips of rawhide stretched almost to the point of bursting.

"They tell me there 's a great art in putting on those loads so that they won't slip," said Mrs. Mason. "Mr. Martin will probably have a chance to try it, if the judge takes him up to the 'Last Chance.'"

"There 's a mule-team just come in with supplies for the mine," said Jack, eagerly. "I was going to see it unloaded when I met you. Can't we go down now?"

They traversed presently a block in which were three drinking-saloons, a fourth being across the way and a fifth within sight, turned a corner, and in the middle of the narrow street stood the mule-team: ten sleek, handsome creatures, harnessed to a long dray or cart, loaded with goods piled higher than the roofs of the neighboring buildings.

Unloading had not yet begun, and would evidently be a long and laborious process, for there were countless bags, barrels, boxes, and bundles, heaped one upon another like the stones in a monument, the dizzy elevation being crowned by a couple of trunks, and the whole structure powdered with dust so white as to suggest an Alaskan glacier.

To watch the taking down of such an edifice would apparently have been a half-day's task, and Mrs. Mason carried the young people off to see some of the shops, conducting them through a labyrinth of streets as like to the first ones as squares on a checkerboard, and only to be distinguished from

one another, as Jack said, by the fantastic names of the numberless liquor saloons.

Mary thought she had never seen so many dogs, and certainly never so many men, most of them young and personable, and ready with smiles and lifted hats when Mrs. Mason glanced their way. It was the young lady's private opinion that they looked very nice and friendly, but Jack said indignantly that there must be mighty little business going on in town, or those fellows would n't have so much leisure to stand around and gape at ladies.

The Catholic church and Protestant chapel were visited, and the grove of cottonwoods by the little stream, where there was a dancing pavilion and the band played on summer evenings; and then, before returning to luncheon, a call was made at the post-office. Here — oh, joy so great that the girlish heart could hardly contain it — were two fat letters for Miss Mary Annesley, and the walk home seemed leagues long with these unopened treasures in hand.

There was a stately, bare-legged Indian brave strolling ahead of them part of the way, attired in the usual red loin-cloth, but sporting a further adornment in the rim of

a silk hat which he wore jauntily on one side of his head. Jack was overcome with glee at this costume, and Mary, even in her absorbed condition, gave it the tribute of a merry laugh, which was heard again, in spite of all her efforts, when, as they passed him, he was found to have a hole in the cartilage of his nose, through which a brilliant carnation was thrust.

Once in her room the letters were devoured to see if all was well. Yes, aunt Ellen was much as usual, and able to do a little about the house, but missing her darling more than words could tell. Celia's letter to her "precious Molliekin" reported herself as in superb condition, and as working with Miss Barton like a whole lodge of beavers. Nothing much had happened since she left. Oh yes, the Gardiners had just come in to say they had sold their place very unexpectedly to a young Eastern lawyer with a delicate throat, who wanted to try California climate. His name was Hunter, — Francis Hunter; and his mother was a certain high caste Boston Brahmin whom Mrs. Gardiner mentioned with bated breath.

The letter closed with a whole row of inky kisses, and at the bottom of the sheet

was a sketch of the vine-wreathed gate of Glen Ellen, with a huge sign hanging therefrom on which was printed in bold letters,

> CELIA MOORE, Floral Decorator,
> WEDDINGS A SPECIALTY.

A spider-waisted exquisite with a tasseled cane and a silk hat was amazedly regarding this legend through his single eye-glass, while with one delicate, aristocratic hand he seemed waving away the thought of neighborship with such a person.

"Evidently Francis Hunter," laughed Mary. "Well, Celia would n't have time for him anyway, so it 's no matter if he does scorn her."

The dear California letters added fresh fuel to the fire of homesickness smouldering in the girl's breast, but life in this little frontier town was so gay and so novel, the people so hospitable and Judge and Mrs. Mason so kind, that she could not indulge in long seasons of misery. Every afternoon there were drives on the level roads that stretched miles away through cactus and sage-brush, roads as firm and smooth as

those of a park, and so hard that the horses' hoofs sounded on them like the roll of a drum. The cavalry post, Fort Gordon, six miles away, was often visited, and Mary feasted her eyes on epaulettes, brass buttons, gold fringes, blue uniforms, yellow-lined cavalry capes, and dashing officers on prancing steeds. The regiment was one that had seen much Indian service, and the general commanding took rather a fancy to little Miss Annesley, and delighted in telling her tales of "hair-breadth 'scapes i' the imminent deadly breach," and in seeing her blue eyes dilate till they were veritable round O's of surprise and excitement. There were walks, too, by the tiny, willow-fringed river, the only green spot near this arid town set in mid-desert; there were evening parties and hosts of young men callers, so many that not even the vainest of girls could have fancied their number a tribute to her charms.

While Mary sang and danced and walked and drove, however, there was a constant undercurrent of anxiety in her mind about Ceritas. Why did she not hear from "Miss Barbara," and why did they not come for her to begin her school? Tontin people, those who had visited Sonora at all, were unani-

mous in considering her destination a dirty, sleepy little hamlet entirely remote from civilization, but Mary's work was waiting for her there, and with each home letter she received, revealing as it did unconsciously the heavy cloud of care resting on the household, she took a firmer grip of her resolution to begin her work soon, if she had to walk to Ceritas to do it. Judge and Mrs. Mason, on the contrary, were entirely unconcerned about the delay; said that Mr. Vazquez was probably away on business, that she would doubtless be called for in good time, and that there was no occasion for anxiety if she was never delivered at all. In that case they should take possession of her to pay charges, and a very good bargain it would be, to be sure.

A week after the letter to Mrs. Vazquez was posted, the judge departed for the "Last Chance" mines, taking Jack Martin with him.

"You 'll probably hear from Ceritas in a few days," he said to Mary, his foot already in the stirrup, "and when I come back I'll see that you get off comfortably. Be a good girl, and don't abuse my absence by breaking every heart in town."

STREET SCENE IN CERITAS

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Jack, who with fatherly solemnity had frequently warned her against her impatience to be gone, advising rather that she should remain in Tontin altogether, clattered up at this juncture, brave in a flapping Mexican sombrero, a yard and a quarter round the brim, and decked with silver cords and tassels. His waist was swathed in a red silk sash into which a pistol was thrust, and thus attired, and with his jingling spurs, he made a most dramatic and picturesque appearance as he jumped from his horse to bid adieu to the ladies.

"Good-by, Miss Annesley," he said, holding her hand with a tight, boyish squeeze for a moment; "I'm sorry to go, if only for a few days, but they say it 'll do me good up there, and I *must* get well, you know. We 'll have lots of fine rides when I come back. Good-by again. Good-by, Mrs. Mason."

Mary watched him out of sight with a curious and unexpected lump mounting in her throat. "He 's such a nice boy," she thought, "and he looked paler than ever under that umbrella of a hat. Oh, I do hope he 'll get better. . . . I wonder if I shall be gone before he comes back. . . . Mrs. Mason," she called after a moment, "I

think I 'll go down to the post-office now, if you don't mind. I won't be long."

"Very well, dear," sounded from an inner room, "and will you tell Larry as you go, that we shall want the horses at three o'clock? We 'll drive to the Post and hear the band this afternoon."

Such curious ways have things of happening in this topsy-turvy world that the first thing that met Mary's eyes as she unlocked the mail box was a letter from Ceritas.

"Oh, of course," she groaned, "just as the judge has gone, and I can't get any advice, and can't bid him good-by! Is n't it too provoking!"

She read the letter as she walked home, too absorbed in its contents to notice that Tom Travers flew out of his office door to bow to her, that Mr. Archer nearly tumbled downstairs in his anxiety to reach the street before she passed, and that Dick Bolton, whom she really liked, stood hesitating at the corner, ready to "light her on her homeward way," if given the least encouragement.

What were Tom, or Dick, or Harry to her, however, in her present state and in view of the contents of the letter?

Mrs. Vazquez wrote that her husband was absent on business, and that she had waited a few days before answering Mary's letter, hoping to be able to come for her in person, but had found it impossible, as their friend and next-door neighbor, Mr. Altamirano, who might have escorted her, was just now at his post in the State Legislature. Mary must therefore come down in the stage; it was a two days' trip, but there was no night travel, and on the afternoon of the second day she would meet her at Loma Prieta, fifteen miles from Ceritas, and bring her home herself.

Mary's heart fell to the sinking-point as she thought of another stage journey, unattended this time, and she walked a mile into the country to regain her courage and study how to present the matter to Mrs. Mason in the best light.

Even this best light, when subsequently turned on, was apparently regarded as but a farthing-candle by that lady, who declared that the journey was not to be considered for a moment, that the judge would never hear of it if he were at home, that it was not safe, and that she could not think of allowing it.

Mary promised to consider the matter for a while, and did so to such purpose that she posted a letter before breakfast next morning, announcing that she would be at Loma Prieta on the fourth day from that date. When it had dropped into the box with a dull sound that seemed to settle the matter, she bravely made her way into the stage-office and engaged her passage, leaving the agent rubbing his eyes in surprise at the youth of this early-risen business woman.

The die was cast, and Mrs. Mason had nothing to do but bewail the decision, which she did to such purpose, being manfully assisted by all callers, that her poor charge felt as if she were about to take as precarious a journey as the Three Wise Men of Gotham. Still she grasped her courage in both hands, made her preparations, and wrote her home letters, closing each one with the doubly underlined warning: —

"THE SONORA MAIL GOES OUT EVERY MONDAY AND IT TAKES FOUR DAYS TO GET A LETTER THERE FROM CORONA. *Verbum sap.*"

She said not a word, of course, brave little maid, of any of her fears or heart-sink-

ings, and affected to consider her trip with perfect unconcern.

The eventful Monday came; Mrs. Mason accompanied her to the stage-office and bade her a tender farewell; she climbed into a rickety buckboard, drawn by two wicked-looking mustangs, and was whisked out of sight in a moment, sped upon her way by a dozen waving hats and a dozen good-bys from as many manly throats.

"It is done!" thought Mary: —

. . . "'We are gone, over bank, bush, and scaur;
They'll have fleet steeds that follow!' quoth young Lochinvar."

CHAPTER VII.

HO, FOR CERITAS!

SURELY never was vehicle so well designed for the discomfort of travelers as the Ceritas buckboard! It was without springs, it was dusty and dirty, there were gaping holes in its floor, its canvas curtains were torn in ribbons, its leather seats were slit and the stuffing was oozing out, its woolly steeds were gaunt and evidently came of a nameless race, and its driver was a tousle-headed youth, wrapped in a blanket. All these details were noted by Mary's quick eye, but she was too young to find them anything but novel and amusing, and too inexperienced to foresee that they boded ill for either a safe or a pleasant journey.

When the stage-office had been left a few squares behind, they stopped on a corner to take up a swarthy, disreputable looking fellow, who, with a surprised and rather sinister glance at the youthful passenger, took his seat by the driver. At the outskirts of

the town they stopped again at the door of a well-kept house, and an elderly Mexican gentleman, with a basket, a bag, and a bundle of traveling shawls, installed himself in the stage. As he took his seat, he addressed a few courteous words in English to Mary, who was the more delighted to hear them, as she had already found that her comprehension of Spanish conversation was rather limited. Here was an interpreter for the journey, and evidently a gentleman too, if her intuitions did not deceive her.

Uncertain what conventionality demanded of her, if indeed conventionality cut any figure in an unescorted journey into Mexico at her age, she looked out at the landscape, though she could not help being conscious that her companion was staring at her with a puzzled gaze. He soon opened a conversation which greatly relieved her embarrassment, for in its course she learned that he was the Mexican consul for Tontin, that his name was Alvarado, and, joyful information, that he was going to Ceritas!

When he discovered on his part that Ceritas was also her destination, and that she was traveling alone, he shook his head and murmured under his breath some Span-

ish words which Mary only partly caught. They sounded like an appeal to the saints above, though why the blessed should be called upon just then was not clear to her mind.

Nor did she understand for months what happened directly afterwards, though it was a deed of chivalry and a credit to the blood of all the Alvarados. The consul stopped the stage; he alighted, and apparently requested the ruffian on the front seat to alight also; they held a parley, the consul pointing toward Tontin; the ruffian shook his head; the consul held out a handful of silver and stamped his foot; his antagonist looked at it disdainfully and shrugged his shoulders; the consul held out more silver and a package of cigarettes; the ruffian seemed to regard this offering with favor, pocketed it at once, and walked away in the direction of the town.

Mary idly looked on at the scene without understanding the dialogue, thinking how quickly they talked, how dramatic the consul's gestures were, and how interested the driver seemed, though she could not see why he kept looking at her. She could not but wonder what the subject under discussion

might be, finally deciding that the consul must have forgotten some important duty, though it seemed strange he should confide it to that drunken-looking rascal. Never mind, she must not be too curious, and she fell into musings about Ceritas, wished Princess Celia were there to sketch the stage, and finally, returning to present things, thanked her kindly stars for her companion, though, indeed, she was too young to realize what good cause she had for gratitude.

"You do not object to a cigarrito, madam?" asked a grave voice at her elbow.

"Oh no, sir, no indeed. Who could object to it in an open stage?" answered Mary, inwardly chuckling at being called madam, and also at the fact that the driver had been smoking like a chimney ever since they started.

"You American ladies are very complaisant," rolling a cigarette with a practiced hand, "and very brave too. I doubt if you would find any of my countrywomen willing to undertake a journey like this at your age, and alone."

"Perhaps not, sir; but I did n't know anything about frontier travel until I reached Yuma, and then of course I had to go to Ceritas, for I 'd promised, you see!"

"To promise and to perform are the same thing, then, señorita?"

"I mean they shall be, sir, with me," with a brave look into the dark face.

"Good, good, my child! I foresee much happiness for my little compatriots when they learn of you. It is a beautiful country, mine, but," with a sigh, "it is poor, it is harassed by political troubles, and education is very backward."

Then there was a silence, — Mr. Alvarado lost in thought, his half-shut eyes gleaming through a cloud of smoke, and Mary beginning to look about her to find that a change in the landscape had already taken place. The sage-brush had been replaced by a short, autumn-tinted grass, whose pale yellow stalks and fringed tips showed a peculiar lustrous sheen as they bent and rose to the breeze. The course of a distant stream was outlined by a waving ribbon of cottonwood trees, the far-off mountains were softly blue like those around Corona, and the hard smooth road offered so little resistance to the wheels of the buckboard that one almost felt as if flying through space. Mr. Alvarado talked a little now and then about Mr. Vazquez, who seemed to be a great friend,

spoke of Doña Barbarita, as he called her, whom he evidently admired, described Ceritas, and told some thrilling Apache stories, which were much more to his companion's taste on that gloriously sunny morning than they might have been as the evening dusk began to fall.

They stopped for dinner near the frontier at a half-deserted village, many of whose houses were a mass of crumbling adobe bricks. A swinging sign bearing the name "The Lone Star" marked the place of refreshment, which even to experienced eyes exhibited certain novel and unique features. The entrance was evidently a butcher's shop, or a place for cold storage, in which hung the sanguinary carcasses of several defunct animals. The dining-room, into which this apartment opened, was as usual mud-floored and bare-tabled, while several friendly hens were using the chairs as roosting-places. The dishes upon being handled felt so rough with matter out of place that an instantaneous distrust of the food was engendered; so Mary took refuge in eggs, being ignorant, fortunately, of the modern theory that microbes penetrate even their shells.

A guitar sounded across the deserted

square while they rested on the porch of "The Lone Star," and a fascinating Spanish song was several times repeated in a clear tenor voice. It was a passionate adieu to some loved one whose name appeared to be Semiramis, and caught Mary's musical fancy so quickly that she hummed it again and again during the afternoon. Hearing this, Mr. Alvarado, whose memory, like that of most of his countrymen, seemed to be a storehouse of old ballads and folk songs, taught her the words; and succeeding brilliantly in this effort went on to investigate her knowledge of Spanish, made her talk to him and taught her new phrases, while the driver, who up to this time had been little but a pillar of cloud and as silent as one, emerged from his concealment and showed his white teeth in a laugh occasionally.

Thus passed what was really a pleasant day, for the consul, kindly man, exerted himself to amuse his little fellow-traveler, and in so doing seemed to reap the reward of virtue and entertain himself the while. Supper was frugally eaten from the respective lunch-baskets as they jogged along, and at dusk they again changed horses, the place where they were to spend the night being

about four hours distant, according to the driver's calculation.

Not long had the new steeds traveled before they proved themselves to be either already weary in flesh and spirit, or of a wrong-headedness and perversity never paralleled in equine annals. They balked at hillocks a foot high, they hesitated at puddles, shied at shadows, and came to a full stop with legs wide apart in front of a brook. Three persons and one small trunk was surely no overwhelming load for a span of horses, but as the dusk grew into evening matters grew more ominous still.

It was a cold night, the water by the wayside glazed with a thin film of ice, and as the pale moon rose and hung spectral on the horizon, a chill wind began to blow, and the dark shadows flung by the clumps of bushes looked like so many crouching Indians. Suddenly there was a blood-curdling yell and the horses began to gallop furiously.

Mary shrieked also, in spite of herself, and the consul hurriedly said, "Do not be alarmed, señorita, it is the driver trying an Apache war-whoop to stir up the horses."

"Horrors! I should think it might stir up the dead," shivered Mary. "Will he do it again?"

Oh, yes, he not only did it again, but Mr. Alvarado reinforced him several times, and these fiendish cries put the crowning touch to a distressing evening. The beasts for whom they were intended, however, minded them very little on the whole, and began to balk again, finally coming to a decisive, stiff-legged stop in the middle of a moonlit plain that looked as wide as the ocean.

It was now ten o'clock, and the driver gave it as his opinion that there was no hope of reaching Dos Palmas, their projected stopping-place, that night, and that the horses might as well be taken out and left to rest and graze for a while. This was done, they were hobbled, and the two men sat down on the shafts of the buckboard to smoke and talk. Not long afterward the driver, rising, found that one of the troublesome steeds had disappeared and at once set off in pursuit. As he did not return, Mr. Alvarado followed him, and in a few moments poor Mary sat deserted in the stage, no human creature in sight, nor so far as she knew to be found within miles, — utterly alone in the midst of that vast plain of Mexico.

"If Robinson Crusoe felt any more deso-

late on Juan Fernandez, he deserves more pity than he ever received," thought Mary. "Oh, if Aunt Ellen could only see me! If they never come back, shall I mount the other horse and ride to the nearest settlement? I'll drag my trunk behind me with a rope. How funny I shall look! Ha, ha, ha, ha! Oh, dear, but I 'm cold and frightened!" and laughter struggling with tears brought on an approach to hysterics.

Suddenly horses' hoofs were heard, and she composed herself as the two men and the missing beast appeared, the latter wearing an expression of fiendish glee, as if he gloried in the trouble he had made.

"Señorita," called the consul, as she leaned forward eagerly at sight of his broad shoulders, "were you alarmed in our absence? Ah, you are quite calm and fearless, I see. That is well. The driver tells me that he will go on an hour or two longer, now, and then rest until dawn at a wayside place he knows of."

The horses traveled better when harnessed in again, and in another hour they drew up at the foot of a hill crowned with a flat-roofed brush hut, open in front to all the winds of heaven. A little fire was still

smouldering outside, and by its light the consul poked about among the sleeping inmates and discovered, as he told his startled companion in an undertone, that there were already three sheep-herders, the half-breed to whom the dwelling belonged, his Indian wife and grown son, stretched on the ground within in deepest slumber. She was paralyzed with fright and astonishment. Was she expected to go in there with all those people and sleep on the bare ground that cold night? Yes, that was evidently the intention. The consul found her a corner near the door behind a screen of pine boughs, bade her wrap herself in all her shawls, insisted on mixing her a draught from his flask, laid a blanket on the ground, said he would stretch himself out next the screen so that she might feel safer, and handed her to her couch with the courtly manner of the cavaliers, his ancestors.

What was she to do? She could not sit in the stage all night, she could not stand outside, she could not run back to Tontin; and liberty of choice being thus narrowed, she curled up in her corner without a protest. Oh, but the earth was cold; oh, but the wind whistled through the brush sides of

the hut! Her two companions were asleep in a trice, and added their heavy breathings to the midnight chorus sounding around her. How could anybody sleep on that hard ground and in a cold that seemed to stop the very heart from beating? After an hour or so it was more than could be borne, and she stepped softly over the consul, and adding a few branches to the dying fire wrapped herself up tightly and crouched on a great stone in front of the quickly leaping blaze. This was no time for tears, but for very blackness of misery, and for a loneliness and homesickness that pierced the marrow of her bones.

White-faced and staring into the embers, so Mr. Alvarado found her when he wakened in the gray dawn, and with many muttered reproaches at his own pig-headedness and stupidity, as he termed them, he rolled her in his own blankets, piled her wraps on top, plucked the stage robes from the unconscious driver and added them to the heap, and took her former seat on the stone. So, thanks to the Mexican courtesy, which in Mary's experience was never far off when needed, the poor, tired child snatched an hour's slumber, during which time the sheep-

herders took their departure, the owners of the hut arose, the driver awoke, and the horses were harnessed.

Breakfast was found in the lunch-baskets, and as Mary sat mending her dress just before starting, the Indian woman crept up, and with many appealing gestures appeared to beg for the precious needle.

"Dear me, you poor thing!" cried the seamstress, quickly understanding, "yes, of course, a whole paper of them. See, Mr. Alvarado, how pleased she is. Can you make her understand that she can have some thread if she wants it?"

The woman gave her a beaming smile and a quick caress, and as the stage rattled away she stood by the fire waving her hand to her benefactor.

The country all that day was beautiful even in its winter dress: there were groves of cottonwoods, clumps of dark live-oaks, tinkling brooks and swift blue rivers, waving yellow grass, picturesque tumble-down villages, groups of dusky children, bright air and sunshine, and a growing excitement as afternoon drew on and "Miss Barbara" might be expected at any moment.

Yet it was not until dusk, at the mill in

OUTSKIRTS OF CERITAS

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Las Flores, ten miles from Ceritas, that Mary fell into the friendly arms waiting to receive her, and felt as if her troubles had all been lifted for a season. She was warmly welcomed, drawn into the house, and presented to the miller and his wife, as well as to a melancholy young man, with a Charles the Fifth beard, whose name of Raimundo Altamirano seemed all too long for her tired brain to remember.

It appeared that supper was to be taken here, and she sat down to the meal, addressed in English on the one side by Mrs. Vazquez, on the other by Monsieur Lafleur, in his native tongue, and from the other end of the table in Spanish, by his wife. Too weary and confused by this polyglot household either to eat or understand, she was not sorry when after supper two white horses were brought to the door, and it appeared that the Knight of the Rueful Countenance, who had brought Mrs. Vazquez to the mill, was to drive them both back to Ceritas.

On the homeward way this pensive cavalier was almost ignored, for as it appeared that he spoke no English, Mary talked her heart out to her beloved "Miss Barbara."

They reached their destination, drew up

before a long adobe house with iron-grated windows, clattered in through a great double door in the centre, alighted in the court-yard, and Mrs. Vazquez showed the traveler into a spacious, brick-floored room, where three children were sitting by an open fire.

This was Ceritas, at last; this house was to be her abiding place, these black-eyed children were some of her future pupils; the bright flames seemed wonderfully cheering to her tired eyes, and to crown the homelike impression, a beautiful Gordon setter drew near as soon as she had taken a seat and laid his head in her lap.

Her journey was over, her native land was far away, and she was under the shelter of the Cactus Flag.

CHAPTER VIII.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

"GOOD mor-nin', Mees Mehree!" sounded in her ear next day, and a spray of orange-blossoms was laid on her pillow.

"Good morning," sitting up in her narrow cot and pushing back her ruffled locks. "Oh, it is Lucina, is n't it? Did n't I see you last evening?"

"Yes, Lucina — Lucina Mariscal. Not spik much Englees. Mees Mehree teach," smilingly said a brunette girl a year or two younger than Mary. "It is seven o'clock," rapidly, in her own tongue; "do you feel rested enough to get up? because if you 're not, Barbarita says I may bring you your breakfast in bed."

"Oh yes, of course I 'll get up. Oh, what lovely orange-blossoms! Did you bring them for me?" as the girlish figure with its long black braids turned to leave the room.

"Si, señorita. I brought them for a welcome. There are many in the garden."

"Let me see. Who is she?" thought Mary, hurriedly rising and bringing her bare feet into surprised contact with the bricks. — "Ugh, how cold! Aunt Ellen's worsted slippers will be useful here. — Oh, yes, I remember. She 's one of Mr. Vazquez's relatives, and she 's going to live here this winter to learn English and go to school. She 's nice, I know. — Why, my basin and pitcher are brown earthenware. How funny! I wish my trunk were in here. I can't bear to put on that old traveling rig again. — Oh, my pillow is made of red damask. I did n't notice it before; and what a pretty pillow-case, with all that Mexican work!" and so, delaying her toilet somewhat by peeps through the barred window and tours of inspection about the curtained inclosure which formed her chamber, she at last finished dressing and made her way to the room in which she had been received the previous night.

There was a merry breakfast over which Mrs. Vazquez presided, three children being present, Lucina and her two younger brothers, Vicente and Faustino. All these were to form part of the household that winter for practice in English, of which tongue it

seemed that the boys knew nothing as yet. Lucina's accomplishments were only about a month old, and though she already knew a number of words, yet she understood very little conversation, — so it seemed clear that Mary would have all needful opportunities at home, as well as abroad, to perfect herself in Spanish.

The house, as they looked it over after breakfast, was indeed a curiosity in her eyes, and she could not but consider it ill-adapted to any but a tropical climate. It was adobe, of course, flat-roofed, one-storied, and though one hundred and fifty feet long, contained but four rooms, no one of which communicated with the others. There were no doors on the street save the great arched, stone-paved entrance, or zaguan, which usually stood half-open during the day, though each room had two long window openings, without glass, barred their whole length with thick iron gratings, and provided inside with heavy wooden shutters, above and below. The floors were laid with large square bricks, the whitewashed walls were very high, the great beams across the ceiling were unpainted, and the doors, which were fastened with chains and bars, opened

on a brick sidewalk running along the back of the house.

"If you want anything in your room, after dinner, Mary," laughed Mrs. Vazquez, "you 'll have to light a lantern, go out doors, and walk half a block for it. You 'd better follow my example. I 've had pockets as big as Madame Swiss Family Robinson's put in all my dresses."

The kitchen was separate from the house, and when they entered it, a fat and very dusky cook sat cross-legged on the floor in front of the open fire, surrounded by piles of breakfast dishes which she was washing, in that position. A two months' argument, it seemed, had already been held with Doña Juana, regarding the advantages of a table for this task, but she had been deaf to reasoning, and still squatted, like a giant toad, accompanied by her youngest hopeful, a brown-eyed barefoot, who looked up and smiled at the party like one of Carlo Dolce's cherubs. Mary's own room was curtained off at one end of a nobly proportioned apartment, at the other extremity of which was Lucina's cot, the space between being occupied by sacks of brown beans or frijoles piled as high as the ceiling. Mary had al-

ready breakfasted on these useful vegetables, cooked Mexican fashion, and their savor had been so delicious to her palate that she could not regret the presence of the sacks in her room, feeling that they indicated a comfortable provision for the winter.

As they left this chamber, rather a novelty in the line of a maiden's bower, a thin wrinkled crone, wrapped in a ragged shawl, stood in the entrance door, holding out an empty gourd appealingly, while she prayed for blessings on the head of "Doña Barbarita."

"It 's a beggar, Mary," said Mrs. Vazquez. "We give them frijoles here, instead of money. Gather some oranges for your teacher, Lucina, dear, while I fill the poor old woman's gourd."

Back of the house ran a fence of slender cactus stalks, behind which was the fragrant orchard where Mary was taken to pick her first oranges. The trees were loaded not only with ripe, yellow fruit, but with gold and white blossoms, and green and half-ripe spheres, and the two girls took seven-league strides into friendship as they ate the fruit together.

They made a pretty contrast, Mrs. Vazquez thought, as they came through the orchard gate, for Lucina's hair and brows and lashes were of the dense blackness of charcoal, and the pale chocolate of her soft cheek lost none of its twilight beauty beside Mary's tints of cream and carnation.

These rosy cheeks of hers, which she had always derided, considering them blowsy and milkmaid-like, were a passport to favor in Sonora, she soon found, and from their novelty gained general admiration. The little children by and by brought her pink sweet-peas, which they declared, in their pretty foreign fashion, had kept her color in mind when they blossomed; and the older girls used to write her adoring notes in which they called her their Rose of Castile.

This morning the admired roses bloomed brighter than ever, for life looked fairer than it had done for many weeks. The journey was over, Mrs. Vazquez very kind and friendly, two home letters had been awaiting her, the orchard was enchanting, all the children she had seen most prepossessing, and it was with a grateful heart that she walked by Mrs. Vazquez's side, as after luncheon they set out to make a tour of Ceritas.

It was a little place, as she had been told in Arizona, but it was picturesquely set in the midst of rolling hills covered with cacti and backed by lofty spurs of the Sierra Madre range. A clear, willow-fringed river ran by the town, and Lucina was rapturous over the number and beauty of the wild-flowers that would soon be in bloom near its banks. El Cerro de la Ventana (the window mountain) was one curiosity pointed out to her: a barren peak near by, with a broad reddish streak like a dark stain across its breast. Near the top was a rift in the solid rock like a window in a fortress, showing the blue sky beyond; and through this opening, legend said, a famous Yaqui chief, wounded and fleeing from his foes, had leaped a century ago. It was the blood that dripped from his gaping wounds that had dyed the mountain red, said the Yaquis, and never would it disappear, they prophesied, until the Mexicans redressed the cruel wrongs inflicted upon the tribe.

This tale was related by Vicente Mariscal, the curly-haired youngster who had escorted them, and was accompanied by such sweeps of the brown hands, such dilating of eyes, such play of color and such energy of

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emphasis, that even a deaf-mute might have made shift to understand him, thought Mary.

In the public square or plaza, across which could be seen the old half-Moorish church of Saint Francis Xavier, they met an interesting family of a dozen baby pigs, who with their mother occupied the very spot in the centre where a statue might fitly have been placed. Lucina blushed and pouted at this barbarous sight, as she called it, and wondered audibly how it would be regarded in "Mees Mehree's country;" but that young lady, not in the least shocked, stopped so long to admire the pink innocence of the piglings that she was dragged away forcibly to inspect the church.

"There's an interesting tradition," said Mrs. Vazquez, "about the image of Saint Francis Xavier we shall find in here.

"It seems that it was not intended for this place at all, but was sent from some city in the interior, in the latter part of last century, to fill a shrine further south. Well, on the way the mule that carried the precious figure was lost, and after long search was found in a thicket here on this very spot. The drivers, Lucina's mother told me, are said to have employed every means,

sacred and profane, to get the animal to move on, but he would not stir, and so they concluded there was some mysterious meaning in his obstinacy and unloaded the image."

"And when they had done that, the case could not be moved either!" cried Lucina, pressing nearer, "though they sent to the nearest village for the priest to see what he could do."

"Yes, it is said that all effort was exhausted," continued Mrs. Vazquez, "and the priest told them at last that it was clear Saint Francis Xavier wanted a church built in his honor on this very site, and the faithful duly complied with his wishes. He is considered, it seems, the most wonderful saint in the calender for curing diseases, and people come from all over the state, and even from Lower California, Arizona, and New Mexico, to lay their offerings at his shrine."

By this time they had reached the old whitewashed building with its round towers, and tiptoeing over the brick floor, passing the paintings and richly dressed saints, stood before the glass coffin containing the famous image.

"See, Mary," whispered her guide, "the money is slipped through this opening into this great iron-bound box that stands at the feet of the figure, and Padre Romero told me they took out fifteen thousand dollars in gold and silver last year. If only," sighing, "we could have a little of that sum for the schools and the town, though it's well Lucina does n't understand English, or she 'd be shocked at such a heretical remark."

As they left the dim, incense-loaded atmosphere and came out into the sunlight of the plaza, they met a white-haired old gentleman leaning on his cane, who stopped to be presented to the American teacher.

"Ha — hm. Very young!" he observed to Mrs. Vazquez, after the usual courteous formalities had been said.

Mary flushed and felt ashamed, but recovered somewhat when her friend answered brightly, "Yes, very young, Don Alberto, but very well instructed and very capable."

"Hm — ah yes, no doubt, no doubt, but very young, *very* young. Good morning, ladies," and he hobbled away, leaving the conviction in Mary's breast that he was departing to spread the sad news of her extreme youth throughout the entire community.

"Never mind, Mariquita," said Mrs. Vazquez, using for the first time the pretty Spanish diminutive that soon grew so dear, "never mind, youth is no fault, and if it were, it 's one that 's soon mended. Come, children," she added in their own tongue, "let us take Miss Mary to the Alameda. We don't find her too young, do we, Lucina?"

"No indeed, of course not, she is exactly right, and Don Alberto is very without manners," cried this ardent little partisan, whose changing color had shown her disapproval of the old man's bearing.

The narrow streets through which they passed to the Alameda, a pretty square lined with poplar trees, were like the streets of Tontin, the houses built flush with the sidewalk, their brown bricks, flat roofs, iron-barred windows, and heavy wooden shutters giving an appearance of desolate, prison-like uniformity to the town. All the life and color of the better establishments lay in the courtyards and gardens at the back, and the dwellings of the poor could only be distinguished by the lack of gratings in the windows and the absence of brick floors and paved entrances, the one rude door opening

directly into the living-room. Yet the earth floors were cleanly swept, well sprinkled and hard, a saint's picture always hung on the walls, and though the furniture was only a straw mat, a table, and a chair or two, the beds were beautifully white and clean, and much labor had been expended on the pillow-cases with their elaborate bands of drawn work, and the gay damask pillows that showed beneath.

The women and girls who glided by in their soft slippers invariably had either black shawls or rebosos wrapped about their heads, and so folded that only their dark eyes, noses, and a little strip of forehead was visible.

The reboso Mary found to be a long, soft, fine scarf of cotton or silk, with fringed ends, generally either brown, or dark blue and white in color.

"It seems to be a universal toilet necessity," she wrote to her aunt, "apparently worn night and day by some of the women. It is bonnet and shawl in one, and is often so held as to be a kind of mask also, giving a mysterious Oriental look to the dark faces. I wonder if it 's a relic of Moorish customs and veiled beauties."

Against the sunny walls of some of these closed, sphinx-like dwellings leaned silent men in cotton trousers, leather sandals, wide hats, and sarapes of vivid red or purple or dark-blue, with fanciful stripes and designs.

Their felt sombreros pulled down over their dusky brows, their snow-white trousers, the brilliant sarapes wrapped about the shoulders with a fold held over the mouth, the soft brown background of the adobes and the intense blue of the sky above, made a color composition that would have been at once the delight and the despair of an artist, and Mary longed for Celia's happy faculty of sketching, that she might send home some of these picturesque bits.

On one corner, four squatting men, full-grown, bearded ones, were intent on a game with jack-knives which appeared to be nothing but the common school-boy sport of mumble-the-peg, but was attended with so much gesture and declamation that it might have been faro or rouge et noir.

Business must be dull and the country far from prosperous, Mary thought, when grown men have time to play mumble-the-peg in the middle of the afternoon.

From the Alameda they strolled slowly homeward, seeing for one novelty on the way a number of squealing pigs in as many back yards, each one tied up like a watch-dog with a collar and chain about his neck. There was a baby donkey, too, looking over a wall, the veriest of babies, so young that his long soft ears fell like ringlets on either side of his dear furry face. Mary really could n't help climbing up and hugging him, and as at that unfortunate moment Don Alberto hobbled past, it is to be presumed that the stigma of hoidenhood was added to that of youth in his mind.

On a corner near by was a little shop, where ollas, or earthen jars of various shapes and sizes, bowls, exquisitely braided baskets, wicker bird-cages, and other specimens of Indian handiwork were sold, and here they all lingered for a time, Mary exclaiming over the novelties on every side, and finally bearing away a dainty little basket, decorated with a curious lattice-work of black, which she destined for aunt Ellen's knitting.

The Altamirano house, next their own, looked impenetrably silent as they passed, and Mrs. Vazquez explained that the Knight

THE SELLER OF OLLAS

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of the Rueful Countenance had only been at home for a day, had returned to Ures that morning, and had given his housekeeper a brief vacation.

There were more frijoles, delicious frijoles, for supper, and tortillas too, a thin unleavened pancake, a foot in diameter, patted thin in the hands and cooked by an open fire.

In the evening they all sat before the blaze, and Lucina and her brothers sang some Spanish songs, Vicente falling naturally into a delicious second, and the two little lads warbling with great pathos many sentiments about love and sorrow and remorse and despair and passion, which must have been all Greek to them.

As Mary laid her head on her red pillow that night, the exile's song, "La Golondrina," with its refrain of "Nevermore, ah! nevermore shall I return," sounded in her ears with its mournful cadence, and it is small wonder if there were great tears on the long lashes when at last she sank to sleep.

CHAPTER IX.

A YOUTHFUL TEACHER.

"DING, dong! Ding, dong!" clanged the church bell the Monday after Mary reached Ceritas. "Ding, dong! Come along! Come to school, to school!"

The little teacher stood in her own room looking at the day's text on the wall-roll Celia had illuminated for her. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" sounded the triumphant words.

They were a call to arms, a ringing reminder of duty, as well as a promise of all needful strength to perform it, and they were sorely needed by the trembling spirit that heard them. The ordeal that lay before her was, it must be confessed, one that might well have daunted an older person. She had never taught save a class in Sunday-school, though she had given an occasional morning's assistance in the seminary

kindergarten. That was a kind of glorified play for all the older girls, however, and to be asked to help Miss Hunter a privilege for which they daily sighed. She little suspected that this slight experimental knowledge of babies and their ways was now to be of the greatest service to her, nor did she realize, what was also true, that the blood of the pedagogue already ran in her veins, for she came of a race of teachers, whether judges, lawgivers, doctors, professors, or ministers.

She trembled as she thought of her inexperience, she shivered as she remembered that all her teaching was to be done in Spanish, and she might have hidden in the orchard and refused to go to her post at all, had she not been strengthened by the knowledge that Mrs. Vazquez was to spend part of the first week at the school.

She was still contemplating the wall-roll, with occasional refreshing peeps at aunt Ellen's picture, when a rustle behind her made her turn, and she saw four small tattered children clinging to her window-bars like four little monkeys, all gazing with round eyes at the Americana's bright hair and rosy cheeks and at the row of books on the table, the pictures on the walls, the gay

cretonne trunk-cover, and the home-made rugs on the floor.

Five days' experience had accustomed Mary somewhat to the crowd of heads at her window, though at first they made her feel like some strange wild beast in a cage, and caused her to dread that she would be prodded with a stick presently and made to roar. The wooden shutters must be left open, or there would be no light, and as, when the lower ones were closed, the children only climbed up higher and peeped over them, she had resigned herself to the inevitable, and shut herself into the dark for her hasty toilets.

School time had come now, and she caught up her hat and jacket at Mrs. Vazquez's call, and the imposing procession issued from the zaguan, Lucina by Mary's side, and Faustino and Vicente, gayly chattering, in front. Everybody was wreathed in smiles save the heroine of the day, who looked (and felt) as if she were the royal Mary herself, going to execution.

"Now, cheer up, Mariquita," said Mrs. Vazquez, "I shall be with you all day, and you 're going to do well, I know. Your Spanish has improved wonderfully this past

week, and I know Emilio will be delighted when he comes home. You 're a great deal more self-helpful than I had supposed, and the way you 've got on with these boys shows that you 'll work miracles with the younger children. Here we are, dear. Welcome to your new domain ! "

The room had of course been inspected before ; a long, brick-floored, windowless apartment, which had been rented for the new enterprise from a cavalier of decayed fortunes, bearing the lofty name of Don Tiburcio Ramírez de Aragon. Its two doors opened on the plaza, and directly across the way were the ruins of an old church built two hundred years ago, a daily reminder to the teacher of that extreme juvenility so objected to by Don Alberto.

Twenty children, ranging in age from six to sixteen years, were clustered about the door as they entered, the girls in calico and some few in plain woolen dresses, their heads swathed in rebosos, and the boys in home-made suits of some dark mixed stuff. All were neatly dressed, however, for these were children of the best people, who appreciated the advantages of education and hoped for great things from the foreign teacher.

Each scholar had brought his own table and chair, and there was a pleasing variety of color and pattern, — blue chairs, brown chairs, white chairs, green, red, and gray tables of every geometric shape.

> "Black spirits and white, red spirits and gray;
> Mingle, mingle, mingle, you that mingle may,"

murmured Mary, as she strove to arrange them in rows and reduce them to schoolroom precision.

When the children, reinforced by five latecomers, were all seated, Mrs. Vazquez introduced the teacher and made a brief speech which was evidently appreciated by the older members of the company, the little ones sitting grave as judges meanwhile, with surprised, unwinking eyes.

Then the two held informal examinations at each table, discovering that all the larger pupils could read their own tongue fluently, and half of them write fairly well, but that they knew little of arithmetic and almost nothing of geography. All but three of the younger ones could read a trifle too, hesitatingly and with many stumbles, but nobody in school save Lucina knew a word of English. The books which had been provided were English First Readers for all,

with parallel columns in their own tongue, a History of the World, in Spanish for the older pupils, and writing books. This was all, and Mary could not help a hysterical laugh when she heard that she was expected to teach arithmetic, grammar, and geography through the medium of dictated lessons in Spanish. There were slates and pencils, a blackboard and chalk, but here the school apparatus ended.

The rest of the morning was spent in enrolling the names of the pupils, which simple exercise gave real delight to the teacher's musical ear as the high-sounding syllables traveled down the paper.

Plácido López,
Pascual Salazar,
Ramon Chavez,
Lauro Martinez,
Andres Dávila,
Baudelio Padrés,
Santiago Granillo,
Reinaldo Rodriguez,
Eusebio Ochoa,
Vicente Mariscal,
Faustino Mariscal,
Pedro Rosales,
Telesfero Cortez,
Eulogio Garcia,
Panchita Arellaga,
Josefita Sepulveda,
Salomé Garcia,
Delfina Quiroga,
Carmen Cavazos,
Gertrudis Aldama,
Trinidad de la Garza,
Lucina Mariscal,
Dolores de la Montaña,
Manuela Armijo,
Teresa Caraveo.

Luncheon, which was welcomed after this exciting morning, was of milk and pinole, a flour made of parched corn; but there were stewed quinces also, and as each of the young people was given a great piece of panocha, the feast was considered delicious. There were piles of panocha in the store-room, a dark-brown sugar made at the cane-presses into thick round cakes like maple-wax, and Lucina and "Mees Mehree" had already established a five o'clock tea system, the tea being absent and replaced by oranges and panocha.

The children behaved with the propriety of judges on the bench that first day, and their teacher, as she wrote her home letters in the evening, expatiated upon their angelic demeanor and prophesied that it would be no trouble at all to manage them. In this, however, she was counting her chickens at least two weeks and six days before they were hatched, for though awed at first by the American teacher and by the wonderful innovation of boys and girls at school together, they were quite as naughty afterwards as ordinary children; and Faustino Mariscal proved to be a very imp of mischief.

If they were just as naughty, they were

just as charming too, and had the prettiest manners, the most endearing ways, the sweetest epithets at their tongues' ends, and the most astonishing vivacity of any children ever seen. Their tempers were hot, it is true, and they took nothing calmly, but though rather sensitive and "touchy" they cooled off quickly, save in the case of two of the boys, Lauro Martinez and Pedro Rosales, who sulked and glowered much of the time. Lucina was a tower of strength, and should have been made a salaried assistant, her services were so valuable, and there was another girl of thirteen, Carmencita Cavazos, who had prostrated herself at Mary's shrine the first moment she saw her, and ever after spent herself in worship there.

"Mees Mehree," as the children called her, walked home that first night with a package of slates under her arm, and with a ruler, a pointed file, and Vicente's able assistance marked off one side of them in quarter-inch squares for drawing and designing. They were all finished by the end of the week, squares painted on the tables of the younger children for stick and bean-laying, materials provided for bead-stringing, chain-making, and peas work, and a motion-

play, "The Farmer," well under way. The children learned this air and that of a Spanish hymn with phenomenal quickness, and sang them beautifully in two mornings, part of them without any suggestion taking the alto with perfect correctness. The English words seemed difficult for them, however, and the majority were very shy and self-conscious about attempting to pronounce them, Pedro Rosales at first flatly declining even to make the effort.

Doña Barbarita, as everybody called her, went to school regularly every morning and three afternoons of the first week, but the second Monday Mary bravely started off alone. It was Vicente's week to ring the bell; Faustino had accompanied him, loudly protesting all the way that he was big enough himself to do it once in a while, and Lucina was writing a letter to her mother.

The weather had grown much colder the past week, the ground was frozen hard, and Mary shivered a little in her old jacket as she tripped along, and wished her hat had been a hood. The two Americans were the only women in town who wore hats, and for that reason, among others, Mary still drew considerable attention in her walks abroad,

whole families sometimes flocking to the doors to gaze at her.

Carmencita was waiting on the corner for the beloved, her blue and white reboso wrapped tightly about her shoulders and an offering of pepitória in her hand, — molasses candy this, made in sheets and dotted thickly with pumpkin seeds. The beloved was not at all too old to relish candy, and accepted the tribute graciously, though indeed she would have done this whatever it might have been, for she was already too sincere a child-lover to disdain any gift of affection, however unlovely it might appear to grown-up eyes.

The lofty, brick-floored school-room, boasting neither stove nor fireplace, was like an ice-house all that morning, and Mary's hands were too cold to hold a pen and her feet almost without sensation. Some of the children looked blue and pinched, and the few in calico gowns shook like leaves, but no complaint was made, for it was only what most of them would have endured had they been at home, little preparation being made for the brief winter in Sonora.

Mary, inwardly scoffing at Mr. Vazquez, who had written her that Ceritas enjoyed a

semi-tropical climate, sang and marched and clapped and danced about with the children between lesson periods, and at recess took the whole flock home to the Vazquez orchard, where they ran races down the orange-tree walks. None of these precautions, however, availed the luckless teacher, who before afternoon felt herself in the clutches of one of the worst of colds. It was a blue Monday, take it altogether, for her greatest trials, Lauro Martinez and Pedro Rosales, brought long pieces of sugar-cane to school that afternoon, and the one running against the other at recess and causing him to drop his sweetmeat in a puddle, high words and blows ensued, and they rolled on the floor like fighting bears. There is nothing remarkable or to be dreaded in a scuffle between two rough lads, perhaps, but Mary was little used to boys; they were deaf to her commands, and she feared for the effect upon the younger children, who stood by open-mouthed. At the end of her own resources she dashed out and brought in Don Tiburcio Ramírez de Aragon, who, with thunderous waterfalls of Castilian reproach, separated the combatants with well-aimed whacks upon exposed portions of their plump bodies.

PEDRO AND LAURO

He retired, Miss Annesley called the school to order, and then, no more to the children's amazement than to her own, burst incontinently into a flood of tears. A death-like silence reigned for a few moments, and then Lucina in a fierce whisper addressed the culprits as "Barbarians!" which Carmencita followed up by "Shameless ones!" accompanied by angry glances; and Plácido Lopez, the largest boy in school, capped all by growling in an undertone that he'd teach them better manners after school.

Fortunately home letters arrived that evening, though as they had been omitted from the family package, which through the courtesy of Don Raimundo was always franked through, they cost their recipient twenty-five good cents apiece in Mexican postage.

"Here *is* a good piece of news, Mrs. Vazquez," cried Mary. "Aunt Ellen has sold the little vineyard on the foothills to Mr. Hunter, the new neighbor. He's going to try grape-raising, it seems. The place was heavily mortgaged, but they sold it for one hundred and fifty dollars more than the indebtedness, and that will pay the most pressing bills."

"I'm very glad," said her hearer, cor-

dially. "And is your aunt as well as usual?"

"Yes, quite as well, and I have a lovely letter from Celia and a pretty new handkerchief. See!" holding it up.

"A handkerchief is all very well, but it is a poor trifle compared with a husband," laughed Doña Barbarita, "and Mr. Vazquez will be here next week. Your godfather is coming, Lucina," turning to the girl.

Mary lost what followed, for she had discovered letters from both Judge and Mrs. Mason, as well as a note from Jack Martin and a bundle of papers and magazines addressed in his writing. The judge reproached her for not having listened to his advice and for her hasty departure, but was delighted at her safe arrival and enjoined her to call upon him always for any service he could render.

Mrs. Mason wrote that she missed her unspeakably, that many people had called and asked for Miss Annesley, who had made herself such a general favorite, and said that she and the judge should insist upon another visit from her in the spring or early summer, before they went East to Rufus's Commencement.

Jack's note, dated from the "Last Chance" mines, ran as follows, rushing into the subject-matter without any preface: —

You thought it was a brilliant thing, did you not, Miss Mary Annesley, to steal away from Tontin the moment your male advisers and guardians had turned their backs.

["Adviser and guardian indeed! that boy!" thought Mary.]

I understand the sortie was a brilliant one and that you have already captured the enemy's camp, so as the absent are always wrong anyway, they say, I won't put myself more effectually in that position by complaining that it was n't polite of you to set out without a word to me.

["Never thought of it," parenthesized the reader.]

Since Tontin is not as attractive as it was a fortnight ago, I sha'n't leave the mines at present, for I 'm gaining here decidedly, I think, though the life is awfully rough.

If I keep on improving I shall go to town for a few days by and by, and arrange then for a horseback trip through the northern part of Mexico early in the spring. I know it would do me a lot of good, and it might be that Ceritas

could be included in my itinerary. I am sending you some papers and magazines to-day, and shall continue to do so, that you may by ceaseless tributes be sufficiently propitiated to welcome me on my possible arrival.

With pleasantest memories of that wonderful stage-ride of ours,

Faithfully yours,

JOHN MAXWELL MARTIN.

"Nice boy," thought Mary, patting the letter. "I do hope he 's getting well, but I don't know, — I don't know," — pensively, for her eyes were too sadly accustomed to the sight of consumptives wintering in Southern California to find much reason for hope in Jack's appearance.

It was not Jack's letter, however, that filled her thoughts that evening, nor occupied her the next morning as she walked to school, for she was trying to familiarize herself with the multiplication table in Spanish, and to devise intricate problems to write on the blackboard dealing with cakes of panocha, with strings of Chili peppers, and loads of adobe bricks.

Though the cold continued severe as the days went by, it was never again so bad as on that famous "blue Monday," and the

children, as they settled down to regular work, were most of them amenable to discipline and delightfully interested in their studies. They all called her "Mees Mariquita" now, in the endearing Spanish way, and were surely, she thought, the most interesting human creatures that anybody ever had to deal with. The greatest difference she found between them and the children of her own country was their extraordinary enthusiasm and excitability. To restrain them from answering a question whose answer they knew was like trying to dam a mountain torrent. The boys jumped from their seats into the aisles at any general interrogation as if they had been shot from a cannon, beating their breasts and crying frantically, "I, I, Mees Mariquita, I know!" and even the more conventional girls threw back their rebosos excitedly at such moments, and waved their hands in air in wild entreaty to be allowed to respond.

There was much trouble in reducing this vivacity to orderly limits and it even caused slight accidents sometimes, — witness the day when Vicente Mariscal, in his eagerness to forestall Carmencita as to the product of $12 \times 10 \times 3 \times 20$, jumped out of his

seat so hurriedly as to upset his table, break his ink-bottle, tip over his neighbor's chair and send that unfortunate headlong into the street through the open window.

Still the children were alive to their very finger-tips, were thirsty for knowledge, and in all their small rages against each other and the height of their hasty tempers, never turned a cold look upon, nor said a rude word to their darling "Mees Mariquita," already their beloved teacher and dearest companion.

CHAPTER X.

A CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL.

"THERE, those are all done," sighed Mary, with a long breath of relief as she added a nut she had been gilding to the pile in a basket at her side.

"Then if you are not too fatigued, ma'm-selle, I should be glad of your help on these candy-bags," cried Madame Lafleur quickly.

"I 'm not much of a seamstress, but I 'll try very hard, madame. Why, Lucina, what 's the matter?"

"How without manners is that Faustino!" cried the maiden addressed, rushing to the window, her black braids streaming in her wake like two tails of a comet. "What shame thy mother would have, if she could see thee, graceless one!"

Mrs. Vazquez, Madame Lafleur, who had come down from the mill to help, Mary, and Lucina were all gathered in the great living-room, making ornaments for the school Christmas-tree. The two boys had been

exiled from the busy scene, and in order that the preparations might be kept quite secret the lower shutters had been closed, and the workers, turning their backs to the light, had succeeded in making a living screen of themselves.

The wily Faustino, however, had set all these precautions at naught by stealing outside and climbing softly up the window bars, where from the very top of the opening his great black eyes gloated over the bright worsteds, the colored papers, the bottles of gilding, the nuts and raisins, and the gay red and white American candies. His lips had opened into an irrepressible "O—h!" of admiration, and Lucina, catching the sound, had flown to deal vengeance upon him. He tried to scramble down before she reached the window, but catching his foot in the grating, hung there, uttering howls of mingled fear, remorse, and rage.

"Why, Tino," cried Mrs. Vazquez, rising hurriedly from her seat, "don't make such a noise! Oh, thank fortune, there 's our neighbor; he must have come home last night. Raimundo!" she called, "do come and get this child down, and if you 're going to ride can't you take him with you? We

are busy with Christmas work and he has been very troublesome to-day. How do you do?" reaching her hand through the gratings. "We are so glad to see you again."

"I am always very well, señora, and always at your orders," answered Mr. Altamirano, clattering up to the window. . . . "Turn thy foot the other way and get down, thou monkey!" to Faustino. . . . "And the Señorita Annesley, is she in good health?"

"Perfect, thank you. Come in and see us, Raimundo. Emilio's at home, you know."

"No, is he? That is good news. I'll be in this evening probably. . . . Jump up, little one, and behave thyself properly. . . . I'm going to Escabras, Barbarita, and may not be home till dusk. Adios!"

"Adios, amigo!" waving her hand. "I'm afraid, Madame Lafleur, that Tino is n't getting much of a punishment for his naughty tricks," she said, smiling, as she took her seat. "Both the boys are devoted to Raimundo."

It was well that this holiday week was so busy and so full of happenings, for as the blessed Christmas Day drew near, Mary, whenever she had time for thinking, plunged into bitter waters of homesickness that en-

gulfed her "eye-deep," as the Mexican saying is. She turned her thoughts resolutely away from home, recited the multiplication table in Spanish when she felt particularly depressed, and scolded herself fiercely for daring to be miserable when every one was so good; and yet the little red pillow, only confidant of her woes, was often so damp with her tears at night that it had to be turned over before she could go to sleep.

She was really uncomfortable too, both at school and at home, for the weather continued cold, the ground was white with frost each morning, and the water with which Doña Juana sprinkled the courtyard froze as it touched the bricks. It was as chilly by night as by day, for nobody who has not slept on a canvas-bottomed cot can appreciate how the wind whistles through it in cold weather, especially when to get any air at all it is necessary to leave open at least nine square feet of shutter.

One night, remembering uncle Bertram's stories of Maine logging camps, Mary wore woolen stockings sprinkled with cayenne pepper to bed, and certainly did not suffer with cold feet on that occasion, whatever her other woes may have been.

Mr. Vazquez, or Don Emilio, as Mary had learned she might properly address him, had returned several days before, and proved a delightful addition to the little household. He was a cultivated man, an admirable linguist, speaking English better in some respects than the two whose mother tongue it was, and he appeared bent from the first in making Miss Annesley equally proficient in Castilian. The Knight of the Rueful Countenance declared when he called, it is true, pulling his pointed beard the while, that she already spoke like an angel, but remembering that he was a young man and a Mexican, and therefore doubly a courtier, the flattered maiden accepted this compliment with several grains of salt.

Don Emilio had entered heartily into the plans for the Christmas-tree and school festival, to be held at his house on the evening of the twenty-third, and had invited all the best people in town to be present, including Padre Romero, the priest, and Mary's critical acquaintance, old Don Alberto.

The school-children were so wildly excited at the prospect, for Christmas gifts are not common, nor Christmas-trees in use in Mexico, that they resembled nothing so

much as a spoonful of spilled quicksilver. They had made their own preparations for the occasion, the boys having indited elaborate letters to their parents to show their progress in composition and penmanship, and the girls having each fashioned some little gift also. They had practiced until perfect the motion-play of "The Farmer," pronouncing the words very nicely, had learned an English and a Spanish hymn, and had also become familiar with the English names of a great many common objects, which knowledge, though they were unconscious of the fact, their proud teacher proposed to exhibit at the festival.

At noon on the great day, while Mary and Lucina were resting under the orange-trees, a clatter of hoofs was heard in the zaguan, and the Knight of the Rueful Countenance came prancing into the courtyard, such a gallant figure that both girls flew to the orchard gate to gaze upon him with admiring eyes. He remarked, casually, that he was on his way to the mill at Las Flores to order some flour, and that he had come to see if Barbarita had any messages for Madame Lafleur. There is no reason to doubt his veracity; he may of course have

been going to the mill, though he seemed in no hurry about it, and his costume appeared much better calculated for a promenade in the streets of a metropolis than for a dusty country ride.

"Oh, what a beauty of a horse!" cried Mary, clapping her hands. "I have n't seen one like him since I left home. What is his name? Will he let me give him some panocha?"

"He is at your orders, señorita. His name is Favorito, and he will be much honored if you feed him," and Don Raimundo dismounted and threw his bridle over the cactus fence.

Mary came through the gate and held out a handful of sugar to the satin-smooth, fire-eyed creature, who lifted it daintily from her palm with his velvet lips.

On a nearer view, it was difficult to tell whether most to admire Favorito, his trappings, or his picturesque rider, and Mary gave audible praise to the two former while she honored their owner with a good many sidelong glances under lowered lashes. The knight himself was as pensive as ever, with his golden-brown skin, soft dark eyes, drooping lids, and heavy brows, but King Sol-

omon himself might well have been jealous of his raiment. His short, graceful riding-jacket was a mass of silver embroidery, his pearl-gray, steeple-crowned sombrero was bordered deep with silver braid and adorned with a heavy-tasseled rope of silver; his dark riding-trousers, widening from thigh to ankle, were open down the side seams and clasped across with tiny silver shells, under which could be seen the snowy folds of the "calzoncillo," or riding-drawers, and around his waist was a wide, curiously ornamented leather belt, into which was thrust a silver-mounted pistol. Heavy silver spurs jangled as he walked, and the metal was repeated on Favorito's headstall and reins, which were of pure silver filigree work, with gold slides and mountings.

And the heavy Mexican saddle! Ah, that was a poem of ornamentation, though none but a strong horse might support the weight of its magnificence. It was of black leather, the flaps and stirrup-hangings artistically stamped with flowers embroidered in silver threads, the seat lined with silver, and the high pommel of the precious metal beautifully chased and engraved. The surcingle was of black and white horsehair

cunningly woven into a pattern, and the rings through which the straps passed were of shining silver also.

While Mary was still exclaiming over these glories, Mr. Vazquez appeared in the doorway.

"Ay, amigo!" he cried. "What means this grandeur? Is it some saint's day that we have all forgotten?"

Don Raimundo swung himself into the saddle, flushing a little under his dusky skin. "I'm going to Las Flores on an errand, that's all," he said, whereupon Favorito began to stand on his hind legs, to curvet and to prance in a way that showed his rider's horsemanship to great advantage, and indicated, also, that he had a soul above errands, if his owner had not.

"Ah, indeed!" commented Mr. Vazquez dryly; "well, you'd better start, or you won't get back for the Christmas-tree. If you meet a highway robber between here and the mill, you can toss him one of those spurs. It would buy him food for a week, you spendthrift."

By seven o'clock that evening the great room where the tree was set was trimmed

with boughs, the gallant horseman returning in time to assist in the decorations; *Felices Pascuas* (Merry Christmas) was set in green letters between the windows, and the tree itself was really a vision of beauty, with its oranges, limes, cornballs, gilded nuts, and candy-bags.

The shutters were kept closed until the guests had all assembled, and then they were thrown wide and the Christmas candles were lighted. The priest was there, apparently not in the least troubled lest such festivities should beguile his people into Protestantism; Don Alberto, white-haired, brown, and wrinkled, sat in the corner, leaning on his stick; Don Tiburcio Ramírez de Aragon was there; Señor Bandini, an ardent patron of the school, sat in the front row of chairs, with his six grown-up daughters; every mother, father, grandfather, grandmother, aunt, uncle, sister, brother, and cousin of each of the children was present, and crowning joy of all, for Lucina at least, her mother sat beaming by the window, having jogged down on horseback from the ranch, in front of her brother, Don Andrés.

The room was much more than comfort-

ably filled with invited guests, the window gratings outside hung full of curious people, pressing their dark faces against the bars; the doors leading into the courtyard were so crowded as to make it impossible to pass, and after a half-hour tables and chairs were brought into the street and men stood on them, one above another, till the sea of heads was like the rows in a theatre.

The children all looked well, though Lucina, who was an undoubted beauty, was the star of them all, and Mary's bosom swelled with pride as she gazed upon the flock, and rejoiced unspeakably that it was hers. When the tree had been thoroughly admired, the exercises began, the children behaving like so many Chesterfields, and even Pedro and Lauro delightfully smiling and obedient.

First there was the Spanish hymn, the entire school standing in a circle around the tree and facing outward, and then the English song was sung; then, "The Farmer" was played with perfect grace and abandon, the older lads not disdaining in the least to sow, to reap, to bind, and to winnow with the little ones; and then all were seated, and Mary, with excited blue eyes and cheeks of

deepest rose, took her pointer, a stick of sugar-cane, in hand, and began an exercise which was an entire surprise to the children. She pointed to the tree, its lights, its ornaments, the gifts which hung upon it, and asked in English the name of each object. Several children were able to answer in every case, and frequently they all shouted together with such vigor that the beams shook above.

Vicente Mariscal, in his excitement, danced about so like a dervish that Mary, fearing he would set himself on fire at the candles, was finally obliged to hold him down with her left hand while she pointed with the right. She asked other simple questions sometimes, as to the shape and color and use of the object, and the unfailing English answers brought the heartiest applause from the audience, supplemented by an occasional excited Viva! which seemed to come from Don Alberto's corner.

When this successful performance was brought to a close, the children presented the gifts they had made to their parents, and then delightedly received their own — each pupil of the school being remembered with a bag of candy, an orange, a cornball,

a cornucopia of nuts, and a bright picture. All the children in the audience were given a piece of American candy and an orange, and Mary asked permission to hand through the gratings to the crowd outside the popped corn, nuts, and limes that remained.

Then the tree, shorn of all its glories, was removed, and Mr. Vazquez made a brief address, thanking the guests for their presence, explaining the aims of the school, and for the sake of Ceritas begging support for this new enterprise which had already done so much good to the children of the town.

Two guitars and a harp appeared at this juncture, and the guests fell to dancing, but Mary sank on a bench by the door, conscious, at last, of overwhelming fatigue. Carmencita flew to the charmed spot and crouched on the floor at her feet, gazing up into her face like a devotee at the image of his saint, Lucina held her hand, three or four of the boys gathered around, and so Don Raimundo found them when he came to ask the favor of Señorita Annesley's hand for a polka.

Señorita Annesley thanked him, but was too tired to dance, she said, and so she was, — but she felt a trifle shy, too, of this hand-

some young man who always looked as if he had a secret sorrow, and seemed, compared with Jack Martin, or any of the boys she had ever known, so grave and reverend a signior. Raimundo was at that moment some years short of thirty, and the sorrows whose depths seemed to shadow his soft dark eyes were entirely a product of the little maid's imagination, but that, of course, she could hardly know, and he always remained to her the Knight of the Rueful Countenance.

The next day was a school holiday and seemed a trifle dull after the festival, but Mary found an excellent tonic for the blues in exhaustive house-cleaning in her own and Lucina's premises. Her room-mate assisted, and they swept and dusted thoroughly, chattering volubly the while. There were no windows to be washed and no way of decorating the bags of beans, so the task was soon over, and Mrs. Vazquez, coming in, suggested making candy by way of celebration. Mary flew to the kitchen for a pail to gather the broken panocha on the storeroom shelves, and tripping gayly along the stone walk, discovered just as she reached her door a large and venerable scorpion in the bottom of the vessel, eying her with an evil glance. The

pail immediately clanged on the stones, and was accompanied by such a startled scream that Don Emilio hurried to the rescue, comfortably remarking as he disposed of the reptile that she 'd get used to such things before long.

The candy was made, however, in spite of this interruption, and proved so good that much of it was consumed after luncheon, while Mr. Vazquez read them a Christmas story of François Coppée's.

Upon this literary circle descended, after an hour or so, a band of desperadoes, headed by Plácido Lopez, who took "Mees Mariquita" captive, and carried her off to haunts among the hills. She had promised for a week to take a walk with them, they said, and this mild afternoon was just the time. They wandered to the top of the high mesa back of the town, and sitting on a heap of stones, while the sun sank behind the Cerro de la Ventana, Mary told them the sweet Christmas story she had just heard, — "Les Sabots du petit Wolff."

Though the translation from French into Spanish was doubtless as full of mistakes as a pudding of plums, yet the children were breathless and absorbed, and if Mary's

forget-me-not eyes were veiled with moisture, when she told of the wondrous miracle that rewarded Wolff's tender charity, you may be sure that answering tears stood thick in every dark eye in the group, while Carmencita crossed herself devoutly, and murmured, "Bendito sea Dios." [1]

The story over, children and teacher ran races down the hill, and coming breathless home discovered, as a delightful close to the excursion, that the weekly mail had come in.

There was a huge two-story box for Mary, which on being opened disclosed, above, a wreath of real English holly, under which were a dozen blue-jay's wings, carefully stretched and cured, while in the lower compartment was a heap of delicious sugar-plums and a card in Jack Martin's hand, "Arizona to Mexico, Christmas Greeting."

Mary thought the writing looked rather unsteady and hoped the boy was n't ill, but could n't help forgetting all about him as she opened a large envelope and caught a sudden view of Celia's photograph, taken especially, so it said, for her Christmas present.

[1] Blessed be God.

How lovely was the soft oval of that face, how dear those long, dark eyes, how familiar the pose of the head, with its twisted coronal of hair! A sob came into Mary's throat despite herself, as she dwelt on every well-remembered outline of the gracious figure, and glancing about to see that her friends were equally absorbed with Christmas packages, she caught up a lantern and fled to her own room, there to read her letters by its dim light, and to gaze upon the beloved face in cold and homesick solitude.

CHAPTER XI.

"LA NOCHE BUENA."[1]

THERE was a step on the stone-paved walk outside Mary's bower, a tap at her door, and Mr. Vazquez called, "Are you ready, Miss Annesley? We want to start in a few minutes, or at least," half laughing, "as soon as the usual search for Tino's hat is made."

"Ready?" Mary repeated mechanically, wrenched with a painful jerk from Glen Ellen back to Ceritas, from tearful dreaming to present duty. "Ready? why, for what? Where are we going?"

Yet as Mr. Vazquez's steps were heard retreating, she remembered that the whole family had been invited to Señora Garcia's, Lucina's relative with whom her mother was staying, to celebrate the "Good Night" and to taste the native dishes peculiar to the season.

She flew to dress and to bathe her swollen

[1] Christmas eve; literally, the Good Night.

eyes, and made such good speed that the cook had only just been dismissed for the night, and Tino's hat been found in the store room, near the panocha shelf, when she made her appearance, brave in the best of her made-over gowns.

Mrs. Vazquez noted at once the tell-tale eyes and pale cheeks of her charge, and took her hand with a warm grasp, keeping it under her arm with a comforting pat now and then until they reached the Garcias' door and entered the brightly lighted room, its shutters all fast closed against the too interested populace.

"Feliz noche buena!" [Happy Christmas eve!] everybody cried as the party entered, and everybody seemed exceedingly gay and merry, for the eve is more celebrated than the day itself in Spanish countries.

Doña Rosita, Lucina's mother, had helped to prepare the dainties, all of which were unfamiliar to Mary, except the frijoles and tortillas, invariable accompaniment of every meal in Mexico.

There were tamales first, — chicken, corn-meal, and a sprinkle of chili pepper carefully mixed together and prettily rolled in a series of corn-husks from which they issued steaming hot.

There were buñuelos, — thin cakes fried crisp, and eaten with hot syrup of panocha, and particularly associated with the season, it seemed; and there were enchiladas also, wonderful compounds of cheese, sardines, olives, and red pepper, the seasoning being so liberally supplied that the little American gasped like a fish out of water, and was forced to decline, for a while, the other dainties pressed upon her.

She recovered, luckily, in time to partake of pepitória, the molasses candy sprinkled with pumpkin seeds, which she always enjoyed, and also of cubiertos, sweetmeats made from the thick flesh of the bisnaga, or barrel cactus. These last were particularly toothsome, tasting rather like crystallized fruit, with some delicious foreign difference. Later on in the evening, between the songs and the stories, chocolate was served, frothed high with a wooden instrument which was cunningly ridged and notched so as to produce mountains of foam as it whirled swiftly around in experienced hands.

"Ah, Miss Annesley," sighed Don Emilio, as he sipped his chocolate, "I wish we could show you the 'Pastores,' the Christmas plays we used to have in the larger

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towns when I was a child. Do you remember, Rosita," turning to Mrs. Mariscal, "the grand 'Pastores' thy father took us to see in Ures once?"

"Remember!" said Doña Rosita pensively, "I was n't more than six years old, but I remember every word and every song. What delight it was and how excited we were!"

"Tell about it, mamácita," cried Lucina, leaning on her mother's shoulder; "thou hast not told us for ages."

"Let thy godfather tell thee, little daughter; he was there, and he is more wonted to speaking in company than a ranchera like me."

"Oh, tell us, nino!" [godfather] begged Lucina, and "Do tell them, Emilio," said Mrs. Vazquez.

The rest of the company joining in the entreaty, Mr. Vazquez leaned back in his chair, and with reflective gaze at the leaping fire began his reminiscences in a rapid flow of Castilian which Mary proudly felt was now perfectly intelligible to her.

"If thou wert only six years old, Rosita, it must have been the year after thy good mother left us."

"Blessed be her soul!" cried Mrs. Mariscal, fervently crossing herself.

"Rosita and I were brought up together, you know, Miss Mary, for my parents died when I was a baby and they took me under their wing at Bacanuchi, the family ranch Lucina has told you of so often. Rosita's father was making a week's visit that season at a great estate near Ures, and had taken us with him, two little motherless creatures as we were.

"Early on the day before Christmas the ladies and children of the family, a merry company, all laughing and chattering and singing, were packed into a gayly decorated ox-cart, and we set off to town.

"Do you remember how grand our cart was, Rosita? We thought it was the finest of all, and we had good reason. It was canopied with a silken bedspread, embroidered with bright flowers, children, and the fringe was so deep that it hung over the lace curtains underneath and reached the axles.

"Thy grandfather, boys, rode alongside as escort, with all the other gentlemen, and what joy thou wouldst have had in their horses, Vicente, — for people took care to choose the best of all their herds for the

Christmas Fiestas. We seldom see such animals nowadays, more 's the pity, for the breed has run down very much, especially here in the north.

"Well, the whole road that day, I remember, was crowded with decorated carts, prancing horses, bright silver trappings, and splendid riders, and as the carts passed each other, ladies and children parted the draperies, smiling and waving hands, and calling out holiday greetings.

"Fortunately for us little ones we reached town early enough to see all the preparations for the 'Pastores,' and, another piece of great luck, we found that the play was to be given in the courtyard of the very house we were to visit.

"When we drove in, Indians were unloading carts full of willow branches and tule, the walls were being decorated, booths put in place for the sale of fruit and sweetmeats and tamales, men were fighting for choice locations, shouting orders and calling to and fro, and in a few places, where the stalls were finished, the proprietors were singing and twanging their guitars. To add to the delightful noise and confusion, some Yaquis, who had already partaken of too much

Christmas cheer, were droning their weird chants over in the orchard, and Rosa and I were so fascinated by all the proceedings that we could not be kept at the dinner-table, and had to be dragged to supper by main force."

"Thou wert screaming and kicking in my father's arms all the way to the dining-room. I can see thee now," laughed Mrs. Mariscal.

"I dare say I was, and very badly trained they must have thought me; but when it grew dark, and we were sent into the court-yard again, and the actors plunged candle-wicks into bowls of melted tallow and set them here and there on the adobe walls, then the scene was like veritable fairy land.

"'Los Pastores' (the shepherds) was a kind of sacred drama performed by strolling players, you know," turning to Mary, "the same sort of thing, I suppose, that they used to call a 'Mystery' in early English days, and very like the performances that the Christmas mummers still give in some parts of Austria and Germany."

"Was it something like the Passion Play?" asked Mary.

"Yes, so far as it represented sacred his-

tory, — but of course it was an extremely simple thing, in three brief scenes, with quaint, traditional words and music. The principal characters, as I remember them, were the Archangel Michael, the devil, a chorus of shepherds, and Bártolo, a clumsy, clown-like fellow, who supplied the humor of the drama.

"When the guests were all seated and as many of the Indians and dependents had crowded in as could be packed into the space, the play began.

"The first scene showed the shepherds watching their flocks by night, and very pretty and realistic it was in that dim light, with the stars for a roof; in the second, the archangel, an impressive, white-robed figure, entered, and announcing the birth of Christ, commanded the shepherds to visit the manger and fall before him in adoration.

"Just at this point the devil leaped into sight, and he really was so horrible with his tail and hoofs and horns, in the half-light of the flickering torches, that Rosita there screamed and hid her head on her father's shoulder as if she thought His Majesty was going to carry her off."

"Yes, and if you remember, Emilio,"

cried Mrs. Mariscal, "some of the Yaquis were so terrified that they scrambled over the wall, calling on the saints with all their might, and they could not be coaxed near the house till next day."

"It did n't have that effect on me," laughed Don Emilio. "I 'd have given everything I had in the world to play that part and stamp about the courtyard with those cloven hoofs."

"Well, in the second scene the devil does his utmost to dissuade the shepherds from journeying to worship the new-born Babe, and the lazy Bártolo lies there on his sheepskin, cracking jokes, ridiculing his comrades, and making a very efficient devil's aid. But you need not suppose there was any irreverence about the play; it was all done very simply and seriously, and certainly made a great impression on two little ones, I know, — is it not so, Rosita?

"The last scene opened in the stable at Bethlehem, the Holy Family being invisible and supposed to be sleeping in the darkness at the back of the cave.

"The shepherds press toward the entrance, and the devil, standing in front of them, is barring their passage with out-

stretched arms, when the shining white archangel rushes in with drawn sword, and challenges the fiend to mortal combat."

"What a splendid scene!" cried Mary, while the boys and Lucina leaned forward with dilated eyes and parted lips.

"It certainly was very impressive, and I wish you could have seen the wild enthusiasm among the spectators; many of them standing up in their chairs, some rising to their feet and pressing toward the front, others clutching their neighbors' hands, and actually sobbing in their excitement.

"And then you should have heard the clamors of 'Viva!' and thunders of applause when the devil was vanquished at last, and in the midst of a kneeling group of shepherds Michael set his foot upon the writhing body of his enemy and waved his shining sword in air."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Mrs. Vazquez; "and it must have been very well played, too, when it impressed a little boy so much. . . . But hark, what is that? Why, listen to the bells and look at these children, and Mariquita too, up till midnight and going to 'La Misa del Gallo' at four in the morning!"

There was a chorus of exclamations,

wraps were hastily sought, good-nights said, and the little company went out into the quiet streets, the boys Mary's escort on either hand. The bells were ringing, ringing, ringing, rocking their towers in an ecstasy of joy over the "Good Night," pealing out with the splendid strength of their iron voices over and over again their glorious message: —

"The Christ is born! the Lord has come
Good-will on earth to bring."

"Listen to the bells, Mary," cried Mrs. Vazquez. "What a rapture there is in every one of them! And hear the cock crowing far in the distance! He is calling, 'Cristo nació!' [Christ is born!] you know, so the Spanish saying is, and that 's why the mass on Christmas morning is called 'La Misa del Gallo,' for the cocks are all awake then and pealing out the story."

"And the cattle too, Mees Meh-ree, they know," said Lucina softly, pressing to her side; "they all kneel to Babe Jesus as soon as the midnight bells ring."

"Little Bethlehem, sacred Bethlehem, looked very much as Ceritas does now, on the night of Christ's birth, children," said

Mr. Vazquez gravely. "I walked its dark streets one winter evening and thought of my native village as I passed the low, flat-roofed houses. It was on just such a night of stars, too," looking up to their dazzling brightness, "that the angel of the Lord came to the shepherds and the glory of the Lord shone round about them."

There was a reverent stillness in the group, as "that solemn midnight centuries ago" was thus brought so close to fancy, and not a word was spoken until Mrs. Vazquez began to sing in an undertone, —

"O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!"

Mary joined her fresh young voice to the melody, and as she threw herself on her cot to rest before "La Misa del Gallo," as presently bands of people, all singing, began to stream by her grated windows, as by and by she listened in the crowded church to the impressive service, she seemed to hear no foreign language, but over and over again, in her own home-tongue, just these words: —

"Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The Everlasting Light,
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee to-night."

CHAPTER XII.

THE COMING OF SPRING.

SPRING was wandering through Sonora, and at the kiss of her soft feet the grass-blades all began to peep, and leaves and blossoms everywhere unfolded as her rosy fingers touched them. The first week of March had barely opened, yet here was Mary writing letters in the orchard under orange-trees that were bowers of fragrant bloom, while on a chair at her side sat two fat brown jugs, one holding a spray of deepest pink almond blossoms, the other a branch of white lilies with long golden stamens.

The letters were important ones, for they were to Glen Ellen, and the weekly mail was to leave next morning; yet the pen often halted as the rosy scribe leaned over to take long breaths of the flowers, or lifted her eyes to the Cerro de la Ventana, whose deep cañons were filled with the soft blue haze of afternoon.

Three months' teaching had certainly not impaired Miss Annesley's health, if one might judge from appearances, though every Friday night during that time she had declared herself worn to the bone and her wits absolutely threadbare. The school had thus far seemed to give perfect satisfaction to everybody concerned, one patron declaring to Mrs. Vazquez that whatever the teacher had of youth, she had also of beauty and goodness, and that the sum total was above improvement.

Mary herself knew her work to be full of defects, and worried more than any one knew over the lazy Pedro, who would not study, over restless Faustino, who was as slippery as wet soap, and over Teresa Caraveo, who, diligent as she was, seemed utterly impervious to new ideas. Still in spite of these drawbacks, the work interested her intensely, and most of the children were so bright and so studious that encouraging progress had really been made in every direction.

She had good cause to be thankful for her mercies, thought the little maid that sunny afternoon, for news from home continued good, — the latest items being that Celia had just decorated an entire house for

a child's birthday party, and that the new neighbor, Mr. Hunter, had rented all the barns and outbuildings at Glen Ellen for his numerous horses, vehicles, long-pedigreed cows, and fancy fowls.

He is really very kind and attentive, [wrote Celia,] comes in two or three times a week to play to mother (he has a genuine Stradivarius and its price is above rubies), and he 's altogether considered to be a great addition to Corona society. He wants mother to see a new physician, a friend of his in Los Angeles, and perhaps she will consent. He is very much interested in you, by the way, and sends you his admiring regards.

It was this letter of Celia's which Mary was answering this afternoon, and as her eyes rested on Mr. Hunter's message, she sniffed rather contemptuously and said something quite unjustifiable about intrusive, meddlesome people, who thought they could set the whole world right because they came from Boston. It was pure jealousy, it must be confessed, that prompted the sniff and the undeserved epithets, for the loving, impetuous girl could hardly endure that any one should be near her dear ones,

while she was so far away, and she gloried in every hardship she had to bear, because a pain the more for her in Mexico meant one the less for the tired heart in California that had suffered so much.

She had enough grace, however, to be ashamed of her jealousy, and she stopped a moment just here to wrestle with the demon.

"You wretch," she cried to herself, "how can you be so mean as to grudge poor aunt Ellen and Celia any help and comfort they can get. It 's little enough they 've had lately, and you ought to be glad there 's somebody near by, who is interested in them. Pull yourself together now and send a nice message to Mr. Hunter as a penance."

The quill scratched and the paper rustled as the letter began again, . . .

Do insist, Celia, upon aunt Ellen's seeing the Los Angeles doctor at once. She 'll put it off, I know, on account of the expense, but I met the egg-merchant to-day and he says he 's going up to Tontin Friday, and will take some money for me. I can send thirty dollars as well as not, though all the children have n't paid for last month yet, for I don't need to spend a penny here.

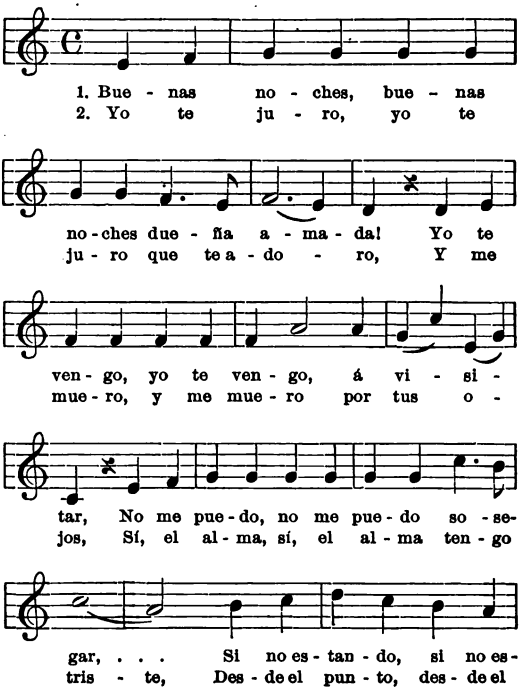
Is n't it dreadful there is such a loss on changing Mexican into United States money? The first time I sent any, and the egg-merchant told me when he came back that I 'd lost ten dollars out of my precious hundred, I just went away and cried, for I knew there would n't be enough then to pay Mr. Gardiner what we had to borrow for my journey. I never realized before that the shakiness of a government had anything to do with the value of money, though I s'pose I must have learned something about it at school. I hope there 'll be peace, on that account at least, while I 'm teaching here.

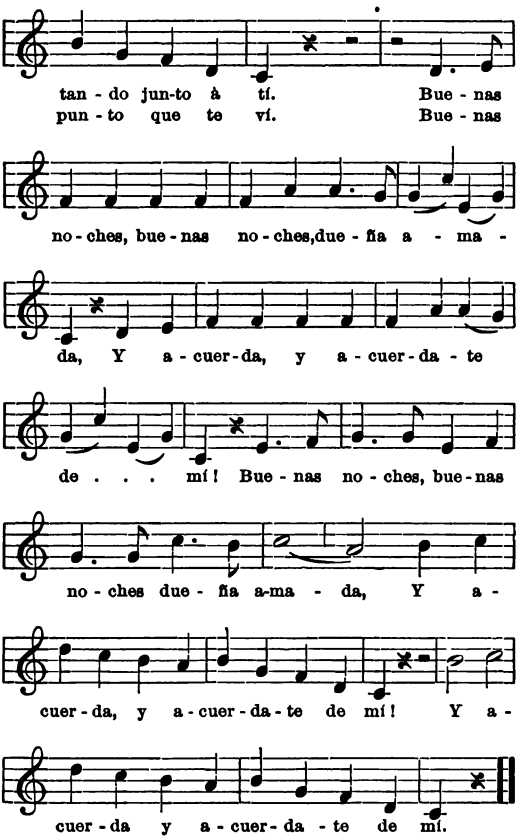
Oh, that reminds me, Celia, — and I 'm sure I don't know why, — that I had the most charming serenade last night and one the week before. I suppose they were for me, because the Altamirano house is next door on one side, an old widower's on the other, and across the way lives a fat washerwoman with five small children. That narrows the thing down, you see, so you need n't accuse me of conceit.

Well, I 'll tell you privately, and you need n't read this part to auntie, I 'd been just a little weenty bit homesick all day and had given Lucina her special arithmetic lesson and gone to bed early. I did n't sleep very well and woke up by and by, and lay there staring through my iron gratings, when I heard a few chords from a

harp and guitar dropped into the stillness, and then a man began singing, "Buenas noches, buenas noches, dueña amada."

I've scratched down the words and notes here, and perhaps you'd like to try it.





Oh, it was sweet, but I did n't dare get up and look out, for both my upper shutters were

open and I 'd have been seen. Maybe 't was for the wash-lady after all. I shall never know, probably, but I kind o' sort o' think it was for me.

Don Emilio says, by the way, that my Spanish is improving wonderfully, and that I do him great credit, and I 'm forced to believe him, for I never knew anybody so critical in my life, nor so frank in speaking his mind.

. . . . . .

You ask about our daily fare. Well, it 's simple and lacks that variety that used to distinguish the Glen Ellen table when I catered for it, but it seems to agree with me. Breakfast is broiled beef or mutton, — queer, long, misshapen pieces, for they sell it by the yard here, — frijoles, bread, and coffee. There 's no butter, you know, they don't make it in Ceritas.

Luncheon is stewed quinces, and bread and milk, and dinner is broiled meat again, beans, bread or tortillas and sometimes potatoes, on very great occasions.

This menu is for every day, remember, and always, for there 's nothing else to be had, though sometimes, " just for a change," as aunt Easter used to say, we have meat and beans instead of beans and meat.

Yes, the sun is already getting very hot, and Vicente has given me one of his broad-brimmed straw hats to wear to school. I've wound that

red Japanese silk scarf of yours around it, and it makes me look either like a crazy Jane, or an opera singer, I can't decide which. I've had my gray delaine school-dress washed, and it's nice and clean now, though of a length better adapted to mountain climbing than to the lecture platform.

Oh, — you know I told you that Señor Altamirano was teaching me to play the guitar, and he has just insisted on giving me his mother's. It's a perfect beauty, and I did n't think I ought to accept it, but he says it is never touched, and I'm doing him a charity in taking care of it. I've learned accompaniments in one key already, and you can't think what a comfort it is! The Don is very kind to me when he's at home, though I can't help thinking of my first name for him — the Knight of the Rueful Countenance — whenever I see him, for he always looks as if something was "preying on his damask cheek."

. . . . . .

I had to leave off here and go in to dinner, and the children want me now, so good-night, dear, precious, darling princess. A thousand loves to the house-mother, and, see, — here's a round kiss for each one of you from your adoring

MARIQUITA.

P. S. Return my regards to Mr. Hunter in place of his own, and thank him for being so good to you.

"Praised be the saints, it is finished at last, Mees Meh-ree," sighed Vicente from his perch on the gate, as the closely written sheets were tucked into their envelope. "Now will you tell us about that so simpática princess that made her husband out of almonds and sugar?"

"Ah, yes, Mees Meh-ree of my heart!" pleaded Faustino, appearing unexpectedly at her elbow.

"Oh, is Mees Mariquita going to tell a story?" cried Lucina, running breathless across the courtyard. "Come in, Carmenicita — what are you hiding there in the zaguan for?"

Cármen glided softly in, her blue reboso wrapped tightly about her head, and took her accustomed position at the feet of the loved one. She always moved like a disembodied spirit, this dusky little maiden, and Mary was often startled when she looked up from her work at home, to find the child quietly seated on the floor, her soft brown eyes patiently fixed on the beloved teacher.

The story-teller pulled her white shawl about her shoulders, ran her fingers through her curly locks as she wondered what would be a good Spanish equivalent for "Once upon a time," and began the marvelous history of "Perlino."

The too-confiding hero had just been dragged from the clutches of the Lady of the Chinking Guineas, and, safely mounted behind his beloved, was clattering over the drawbridge of the enchanted castle, when deep voices were heard in the courtyard and two gentlemen leaned on the orchard gate.

"What an adoring audience you have, Miss Mary!" laughed Mr. Vazquez. "Ay, Raimundo," with a mischievous glance at his friend, "Si hay nieve en el llano, como estará en la sierra, eh?"[1]

Señor Altamirano made no answer to this embarrassing application of a popular saying, but opening the gate as if it were unheard, asked in his courtly way, —

"Will the señorita be pleased to have a music lesson this evening?"

"Oh yes, sir, thank you, with great pleasure. Vicente, will you get the guitar, and

[1] If there 's snow on the plain, how must it be on the mountain?

be very careful with it, querido, as you cross the courtyard. No, no, Faustino," with a detaining hand, "you 're too little."

The lad brought the instrument quickly, stepping cautiously over the stones like a cat afraid of wetting her feet, and Mr. and Mrs. Vazquez and the children strolled off down the garden paths.

It was a beautiful guitar, indeed, and Mary had sent to Tontin for ribbons to decorate it, choosing red, white, and green, the Mexican colors, in compliment to the donor. She had been writing to Jack Martin the day she received it, acknowledging some of the many books which arrived with unfailing regularity, and had commissioned him to select the ribbons for her the next time he went to town. They had come after a little delay, and fastened to one of them was a finely wrought silver eagle standing on a cactus-stalk, the emblem that always appears on the Mexican flag. "Like his extravagance," thought Mary; "he must have ordered it in San Francisco. They never would have such a thing in Tontin."

"Did I ever tell you where the guitar was made, señorita?" asked Don Raimundo, as he tested the strings and turned the ivory pegs.

"No, sir; will you be so kind as to do so?" — She spoke politely, very politely always, to the K. of R. C.

"My mother was native of a village near Guadalajara, as I think I told you, and close to her birthplace had always lived a tribe of Indians, peaceful, industrious people, all Christians. The chief was a great musician in his own wild way, and an adept at making guitars. You had only to tell him about what you were willing to pay for an instrument and he would make it exactly as desired. His guitars were noted all over the country for their beautiful tone, and my mother said he once told her that he always selected the wood from the trees where the mocking-birds sang."

"A pretty idea," said Mary, idly watching the brown fingers wander over the strings.

"The Indians have many poetic thoughts, señorita.

"He had always admired my mother's voice, it seemed, — she sang like a wood-dove calling in the spring, — and on one of her saints' days he brought her this guitar.

"'Take it, Margarita,' he said, 'it is for thee; it is made of wood where the birds

have nested, and the elders of the tribe have blessed it. It will bring happiness to every woman's hand that touches it.' " . . . Here came a few soft chords on the vibrant strings. . . . " May his prophecy be a true one for you, too, señorita! My blessed mother was a happy woman while she lived."

" Thank you, sir," said Mary shyly, for she was touched by the story and scarcely knew what to say in comment.

There was silence for a moment, and then Señor Altamirano broke from his reverie with a start.

" Shall I teach you a new accompaniment to-night? " he asked.

" If you please," said Mary, and she was soon deep in the chords of D Major, and complaining about the leaps and bounds and strained position of fingers required to execute it properly.

The lesson was over, and she was finding an accompaniment to " La Chinaca " [1] under Raimundo's direction, when the family returned.

" Sing it louder, Mary," said Mrs. Vaz-

[1] A Mexican patriotic song composed at the time when effort was being made to establish Maximilian as Emperor of Mexico.

quez from the door, "and we 'll join in the refrain."

"Yo soy una chinaquita," warbled Mary gayly in answer, surrendering the accompaniment to Raimundo, and executing her solos with so much patriotic fervor that the boys were electrified, and danced and stamped and shouted "Viva!" as each chorus was ended.

"Come in, Raimundo, and sing to us," called Mr. Vazquez, appearing in the doorway with his cigarrito; "it 's too cold in the orchard for Miss Annesley any longer, and you have n't sung here for months."

"Oh, I 'm so sorry, Señor Altamirano," cried Mary. "I never heard you sing and I 'd like to so much, but I have some school work to do for to-morrow and I shall have to set about it this minute. I had no idea it was so late. Good-night, Mrs. Vazquez, dear. Buenas noches, everybody!"

"Buenas noches!" came in chorus from house and garden, and, portfolio and flowers in hand, Mary tripped across the stones to her room.

The singing began as she opened her door, and a sweet baritone voice floated in with the odor of the orange blossoms.

"H-m, h-m," said the little maid reflectively, as she lighted her lantern and took up her exercise-books. "There 's something very familiar about that. Never heard Don Raimundo sing, did I? Well, if his was not the voice of that serenader the other night, he must have a twin brother."

CHAPTER XIII.

RUMORS OF WAR.

"LUCINA!" called Mary one night in late March, sitting up in bed, her teeth chattering with fright, — "Lu-ci-na! what *is* that dreadful noise?"

Sleepy sighs from the other side of the curtain, and confused murmur of "Borrachos."

"No, it is n't drunkards. Lucina, wake up!! It 's been going on for a long time. . . . Hark, there 's a pistol shot! Oh dear, what *can* be the matter?"

Bang, bang, crash, bang, went a fusillade of shots, followed by loud cries and shouts, and in the confusion a white figure darted under the curtain and Lucina flew into Mary's cot.

"Oh, Mees Meh-ree," she shivered, "perhaps it 's another revolution, — you know what my godfather said last night. . . . Ay! de mí! blessed be the saints, what is that?"

There was a clatter of hoofs on the stone-paved street, and with fierce yells of "Viva" somebody, a body of mounted men galloped past.

"We shall all be murdered in our beds," trembled Lucina, beginning to cry.

"Nonsense," said Mary, cooling a little as the other's excitement increased. "We have nothing to do with either side, and what would they get by killing us? It 's a little quieter now. Oh, see that red light! There must be a bonfire in the plaza. How *can* Don Emilio sleep through all this?"

"Perhaps he is n't asleep," whispered Lucina, her lips close to Mary's ear; "but it would not be good for him to put his head into the street, for they 'd arrest him in a minute and drag him off to jail."

"What for?" in wide-eyed wonder.

"There is n't any 'what for' in revolutions, so my father used to say. They know he has money, and no matter which side he belonged to, they 'd find some reason to throw him into jail and make him pay to get out. . . . Do you dare to run to the window and see what they 're doing?"

"Dare? not I! A stray shot might come through the gratings. A—h! is somebody being killed?"

Lucina clutched Mary's shoulder, and both girls buried their heads under the bedclothes, where they lay shivering as another long-drawn wail cleft the darkness.

"Oh, it 's only Raimundo's dog," laughed Lucina hysterically, under the weight of blankets. "Don't you know he went to Bacanuchi yesterday and left Bravo behind? The poor beast is lonely and frightened, I suppose."

Another horseman clattered by at this moment, but the red light soon faded, the shouts died away, and silence reigned again in Ceritas. The girls long lay clasped in each other's arms, straining their ears into the darkness, but at last their tense grasp relaxed, and they fell into quiet slumber.

The morning broke serene and sunny, the usual cheerful noises were heard, and the baker's boy, as he passed on his morning rounds with his shallow basket of loaves on his head, appeared so perfectly gay and unconcerned that Mary concluded she must have had an unusually vivid nightmare. It was strange, certainly, that Lucina's dreams should have exactly paralleled hers, but they both ran to the breakfast-room more than half prepared to believe that there had really been no alarm in the night.

Mr. Vazquez was already seated, and with a grave face was hurrying through his meal.

"I hope you were n't frightened last night, girls," he said, looking up as they came in. "Do you know, neither Barbara nor I knew a word of the matter till the cook came this morning. Our window looks on the court-yard, you see, and we 're both sound sleepers. Well, it 's a bad business, a bad business!"

"What has happened, Don Emilio?" "What has happened, nino?" cried the girls in a breath.

"It 's the end of the matter I partly explained to you the other day, Miss Annesley. Governor Salazar has made himself very unpopular by refusing to sanction several measures this session of the legislature. I don't know the merits of the various bills, — they were passed over his head afterwards, — but I dare say he was right. He 's a sensible, straightforward man, I believe. His lieutenant-governor, Dávila, is a demagogue, — a perfectly unprincipled fellow, — and I 've heard for some time that he 's been working up the popular feeling against Salazar so as to oust him from his place."

"And get it for himself," commented Mrs. Vazquez, who had just entered.

"Naturally; and there are enough thieves and highway robbers and crack-brained fools in this country, or any other for that matter, to back up any man who 'll give them a glass of mescal, a horse and a gun, and let them play soldier."

"But what happened last night?" asked Mary breathlessly.

"Oh, it 's the old story," bitterly; "we 're in the hands of the enemy this morning. A body of Dávila's men rode in last night and took the town. There were n't more than fifty of them all told, but it was the dead of night and there was next to no resistance.

"There was a brief skirmish, I understand, and a few shots exchanged; then they took possession of the jail and are holding the plaza. One or two men were wounded, and one poor fellow killed, — one of the jail guards, a good citizen, I believe, and a decent hard-working man."

"And is it all over now?" asked Lucina, paling a trifle at the horrors of war.

"Over, child! It 's just begun; the whole purpose of this comic opera revolution has to be worked out yet. It won't be 'over,' as you say, till they 've levied a good fat tax for expenses of war, on every man in

town that 's got a real in his pocket. But don't worry a minute, any of you," with a protecting touch on his wife's shoulder. "We 've nothing to fear unless it 's robbery. Just keep close two or three days, and our revolutionists will march away when their pockets are filled."

He was turning to leave the room when a series of ear-piercing screams was heard outside. Mary, whose nerves had not yet recovered from the night's excitement, dropped her cup with a crash on the bricks, and Lucina half rose from her chair and leaned, trembling, against the table.

Don Emilio strode to the door and threw it open. "What is the matter out there?" he called in a commanding voice.

Joaquin, the horse-boy, hurried through the orchard gate in answer, with Faustino screaming and kicking in his arms.

"It is this ill-taught one, your honor," he panted, breathless with his exertions. "He said he should go and see the soldiers, and when I told him your honor had said no one was to leave the courtyard, he ran into the orchard and was half over the wall when I pulled him back by the shameless foot."

"You did right, Joaquin. Faustino," sternly, "go to the dining-room and sit there till I call you. . . . Certainly not, Vicente, you are not to ring the bell, nor to go out without permission. . . . We can have no school for a day or two, Miss Annesley, till matters are quiet."

With a hasty kiss and caress for his wife and an encouraging tap on Lucina's pale cheek, Don Emilio hurried off, ordering Joaquin to lock and bar the entrance-door behind him and to keep all the shutters closed on the street.

The two girls and Mrs. Vazquez stood in the courtyard regarding each other with blank faces, and Mary's hair really seemed to curl more tightly in her agitation. The fat cook, who had prudently brought her three impish boys with her that morning, stood in the kitchen door, the breakfast dishes round her on the floor and her dusky brood hanging to her skirts. Her reboso was thrown back, showing her brown neck and arms and her loose white chemise, and as she rebraided one of her long black plaits, she fairly palpitated with eagerness to seize Joaquin as he came in and discuss the whole matter with him.

"Well, we 're provisioned for a siege, children, in case worse comes to worst," said Mrs. Vazquez, laughing nervously. "With the beans in your room, Mary, the quinces and the barrel of flour, the well and the cow, we can hold out almost as long as they did at Sebastopol. There 's really not a bit of danger for us, Emilio says, but he 's rather anxious about Raimundo. He 's gone out to see if he can hear anything of him now. I wanted him to stay here and send Joaquin, but he says it 's no use hiding like a rat in a hole. Dávila's men want nothing of him but money; and they 'll take that any way."

"Why, is Don Raimundo in danger?" cried Mary, moving a little nearer.

"He 's a member of the legislature, you know, and has defended the governor's policy. Emilio has been begging him for days to go to Tontin for a while, but he seemed absolutely determined to stay here. Reports were so ugly yesterday that he did consent to go up to Bacanuchi, and your uncle, Lucina, is to keep some of the Indians on the watch day and night, in case the revolutionists take a fancy to follow him."

"Would they kill him if they caught him?" whispered Mary, with dilating eyes.

"Kill the goose that lays the golden eggs? No fear of that, child, though they'd drag him round the country and make him endure all kinds of hardships; and of course such fellows are a wild lot and hot-headed, — they have been known before this to shoot a prisoner down if they had any trouble with him."

"Poor Don Raimundo!" exclaimed Mary, "is n't it dreadful?"

"Poor mamá," sighed Lucina. "What fear she will have at Bacanuchi without me!"

"Without *you*, indeed!" cried Vicente, who had been listening to the conversation with open mouth. "What could a girl do? If I were there, I'd defend mamá and Raimundo too."

"It is n't Raimundo's life we are anxious about," said Mrs. Vazquez, "or at least that's only incidental. Emilio does n't want him to be taken prisoner and have to pay a big ransom just now when he's developing his mine and needs all his money. But we sha'n't gain anything by standing here all day, girls. I'm going to set Tino free, Mariquita, — Mr. Vazquez must have forgotten him.

"Remember not to leave the courtyard,

Vicente! . . . Doña Juana," calling from the dining-room door, "the danger will not be increased if you wash the dishes, I think."

Mary went to her room feeling decidedly nervous. What had Don Emilio said about the danger of robbery? Would it not be best to hide her trinkets and the twenty-five silver dollars she had saved for the next trip of the egg-merchant?

Deep down in her heart, too, was stirring another fear that the present conditions could not but increase in strength, for only the week before, Mrs. Vazquez had told her that her husband might possibly have to leave Ceritas for two or three months, and that if his trip were to be so long a one she could not think of letting him go alone.

Mary sank into a chair now with a half-sob. "Oh, for the peace of my own country and the shelter of Glen Ellen," she sighed. "How far, how far away I am! Oh, if 'Miss Barbara' goes, what *will* become of me?"

Tears stole from under her lashes and she bowed her head on the table-cover aunt Ellen had embroidered, and prayed for courage and for strength to bear whatever ills might come to her.

The prayer was answered, too, in the silence that followed, as all sincere petitions for help and comfort from above must ever be, and as Lucina's step was heard at the door, she dried her eyes and was her own bright self again.

"Lucina," she whispered, "Does n't this room with the shutters closed seem like a funeral? Come in here. You know what your godfather said about robbery. Don't you think we ought to hide our money and our jewelry?"

Lucina seemed decidedly exhilarated by the idea. "Oh, yes," she whispered back. "Let 's pry up one of the bricks under your bed, and make a hole and drop everything in there. It will be like the buried treasure in your pirate story. I 'll get a big knife and a chisel, but we must be as still as mice, or the boys will hear, and tell everything."

She stole out with the step of a conspirator, and returning with the tools, locked and barred the door behind her.

"We must hurry, Mees Meh-ree," she said softly, her eyes shining with excitement. "The cook seems afraid I 'm going to give this knife to the revolutionists, and Vicente is determined to know what I want with the

chisel. Oh, you 've moved your cot and got everything ready, have n't you? A—y!" as the chisel dropped with a clang on the bricks.

"Oh, do be careful, Lucina," begged Mary, in an agony of nervousness, her precious bag of money in her hand. "There may be somebody looking through the chinks of the shutters now."

"The saints preserve us!" murmured Lucina, with an anxious glance behind her. "Perhaps you 'd better dig, too, and we 'll finish sooner."

The two girls worked so well that the brick was soon raised, some earth scooped out, and the treasure, a high-sounding name for the modest collection, hidden safely away. Lucina, having little or nothing at stake, regarded the whole affair as a delightful game, pleasantly spiced with danger; but Mary, who knew what it was to earn and to need money, set her teeth as she pushed back her cot, and inwardly vowed that no revolutionists, did they come a hundred strong, should get those silver dollars save over her dead body.

A scanty luncheon, which the cook had evidently doled out in anticipation of a

siege, was hardly over when Mr. Vazquez returned.

"No," he said, in answer to his wife's quick question, "there's no news from Raimundo, but this tempest is in a rather larger teapot than I expected. Fifty more of those fellows came in this morning from Sayula to reinforce those already here, and a band from Isleta, under Dávila's son himself, is reported on the way. Yes, of course it would be folly to attempt resistance, Barbara; I've done what I could to quiet things down, on the contrary.

"I found four of your patrons in prison, Miss Annesley, and lent them what was requisite to get out. Cavazos, little Cármen's father, wouldn't pay, nor let me pay for him, and swears he'll stay there in jail till he wears his guards out.

"Lafleur, up at the mill, has raised five dollars a barrel on his flour, I hear, since the siege began last night. . . . Ah, you're there, Doña Juana," as ejaculations from the doorway were heard at this news; "it's lucky we haven't to buy just now, eh?"

The strange, excited afternoon, peaceful and flowery in the orchard, dark and mysterious in the close-shuttered rooms, had

worn away to dusk when heavy blows, like the knocking in "Macbeth," were heard on the entrance door.

Joaquin, evidently thinking that his last hour had come, went, shivering, to open, and through the zaguan dashed Lucina's uncle Andrés, pale, disheveled, white with dust, his horse dripping with sweat and flecked with foam.

He flung himself from the saddle, but as family and servants flew to his side, he waved them away, putting his hands to his throat and calling for water, only when the gourd was emptied to the last drop, gasping out, "Raimundo! Taken! Three hundred dollars! Two hours!"

"Three hundred dollars' ransom!" cried Don Emilio. "What barefaced robbery!"

"Ay, what villains, what bandits!" groaned the cook, and Joaquin shook his fist in the rear.

"And they 'll take him away in two hours, Andrés, if you don't bring back the money?" asked Mrs. Vazquez breathlessly.

"Sí, sí, Barbarita; hasten!"

"How much money is there in the house, little one?" said Don Emilio, turning to his wife.

"I 'll run and see. There can't be more than thirty dollars, I think."

"Raimundo had some with him, we had twenty at Bacanuchi, and they promised me enough at Cumuripa as I came down to make up a hundred," explained Andrés, who had regained his breath. "They say they 'll let him off for half down and the rest next week."

"Oh, do take my money, Mr. Vazquez!" begged Mary, in a trembling voice, clasping her hands in entreaty. "Poor Raimundo! They 'll take him away before Don Andrés gets back."

"Not they," said Mr. Vazquez confidently. "They 'll wait for the money, the rascals, if they wait all night. No, indeed, I won't take your savings, child. I 'll borrow what I want in town here. There 's no such haste. Andrés always gets excited and loses his head."

While Joaquin was saddling a fresh horse, and Mr. Vazquez scouring the town for ready money, the excited messenger told his breathless audience the story of the attack on the ranch, Raimundo's capture and his interview with the revolutionists. The tale was recounted in so dramatic a style, with

such descriptive gestures, such leaps and bounds, accented by the jangling spurs at exciting points, such imitation of voice and action of the contesting parties, such sudden exclamations, torrents of Castilian, and showers of sparks shot from fiery eyes, that Mary, with her cool Anglo-Saxon blood, felt decidedly embarrassed in spite of her anxious interest, and wished the man would sit down quietly and tell his story like a Christian.

As he galloped off at last, the precious packet of money hidden in his boots, she absolutely gasped with fatigue, and turning to Mrs. Vazquez sighed, "Dear me! what a day! I feel as if I 'd been living in a dime novel. Now, Don Raimundo is safe, do let 's go under the orange-trees and rest, and talk it all over. Come, Lucina! Nothing else can happen to-night, *that* 's a comfort!"

Ah, but something else did happen before midnight had tolled on the old church-bell. Mary had felt so "fidgety," as she expressed it, on going to her room, that, secure behind her barred shutters, she had first written a long letter home, detailing all that had happened, and then had turned to the day's

Bible lesson, hoping to find some words that would soothe and tranquilize her.

She was repeating softly to herself, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety," when there came a tap on her shutters, and a soft voice at her window called, "Mariquita!"

"Why," thought Mary, with a start, laying down her Bible, "that sounds like Raimundo. What can he be doing here?"

"Mariquita!" came the suppressed voice again.

"Is it you, Señor Altamirano?" approaching the window. "Oh, is it safe for you to be here?"

"Quite safe, señorita. The goose is plucked now, you know. Can you open your shutter a chink so that they may not hear me in the street? I saw your light, and am come to say farewell. I have already seen Emilio over the orchard wall."

"Are you going to Tontin?" blowing out her lantern and throwing open one of the upper shutters. "Ah, it is really you!" as the tall figure, shrouded in its sarape, appeared outside the gratings. "I know I

shall perish with fear if you stay more than a minute. Where is your horse?"

"I tied him in a thicket outside the town. I go at once, señorita. I am honored that you think of my safety. I hope my absence will not be a long one, and that to-day's little affair will not prejudice you against my country.

"Adios, I kiss your hand, señorita mia."

"Adios, amigo! Vaya con Dios!"[1] called Mary softly into the darkness, and "Que vaya con Dios!" she murmured, as again she closed and barred the shutters.

[1] Good-by, friend. May God go with you!

CHAPTER XIV.

MANY SORROWS.

THE narrow street lay half in vivid sunshine, half in the shadow of the high brown adobe wall that bordered it upon one side.

On the other grew a hedge of elderberry all white with bloom, and in and out and over and under the branches climbed the feathery, starlike flowers of the Barba de Viejo,[1] while through the white screen they made gleamed the brilliant crimson bells of the pomegranates in the field beyond. The trees were waving green, and behind the brown, crumbling, adobe houses, the cactus fences were putting forth tiny leaves and long spikes of vivid scarlet blossoms, where red-winged blackbirds sat singing in an ecstasy of springtide joy.

"How without manners for a young lady to promenade herself alone!" cried a portly, black-braided dame to her neighbor, as a small figure, in a broad straw hat and a scanty gray gown, hurried past.

[1] Old Man's Beard.

"Well you speak, indeed, Doña Ramona," with a sigh and a shake of the head. "Ay! these Americanas, these Americanas!"

Mary heeded neither criticism nor answer, saw neither the flowers nor the birds she loved so passionately; she flew over the ground with bent head and clenched hands, intent only upon reaching a sheltered spot on the green hillside where she might sob her heart out, safe from prying eyes and curious ears.

The house that had been her home for nearly five months was closed and silent now, for her greatest fear had at last been realized, and the heavy wagon, bearing Mr. and Mrs. Vazquez on the mining trip, had just rumbled through the Alameda. A lodging had been engaged for the two girls near the home of Lucina's relative, Mrs. García, who had managed to tuck the boys away in an odd corner, and had gladly welcomed Mary and Lucina to her family table, although she could not accommodate them under her roof.

After the last good-bys, when Mary had slipped away alone, Lucina had repaired to the new room, accompanied by two faithful vassals from the school bearing "Chuchule,"

the pet squirrel, and a basket of oranges from the beloved orchard.

For the last week Mary had felt like the wretched prisoner of olden days who sees his dungeon walls gradually close in upon him, and last evening, as she had tried to sing a melody of Koschat's to her guitar, she had felt that "Verlâssen, verlâssen, verlâssen bin i!" so perfectly expressed her sad plight that she had broken down altogether and fled to her room. This was the only time her defenses had given way, however, and her distress even then was so well restrained that no one save the sympathizing Lucina noticed it at all.

Mary herself felt that the bitterness of her grief at losing her protectors was almost unjustifiable, for they had spared no pains to ensure her approximate comfort and absolute safety in their absence, the revolution was completely over and Dávila established in the governor's chair, her school was in good condition, and her health left nothing to be desired.

Mrs. Vazquez felt so confident that she would return in three or four months at latest, she was so sure of Mary's courage and devotion to her work and so proud of

her success, that the prospective absence seemed to her rather a trifling thing, and she did not suspect for a moment the agonies the girl was suffering.

"Oh, I know it all, I know it all," sobbed Mary, prone on the hillside, her head in the spring grasses. "I know they mean to come back, and perhaps they will. I know I 'm safe and nothing will happen. It is n't that; I 'm not afraid, but, oh, I am *so* homesick I feel as if I could n't bear it.

"While 'Miss Barbara' was here there was something to link me to Glen Ellen, but now I 'm all alone, and, oh, dear!" — and at this new thought the tears flowed faster — "there is n't a person within hundreds of miles who ever heard of me a few months ago, and nobody anywhere to speak English with. Oh," with a choking sob, "I feel as if Mexico were a great spider's web, and I were a poor fly all tangled up in it, never to get out."

Unless salt water is injurious to vegetation, there must have been an unusual number of flowers later in the season on the spot where Mary's head rested that morning, but the fountain of tears is happily not inexhaustible, and by and by the weeping

Niobe sat up, with flushed cheeks and swollen eyes, and, with her curly head a very furze-bush of tangles, looked across the valley to the solemn mountain ranges. There among the grasses, with her hands clasped about her knees, she took counsel with her forces, chided herself for useless grieving and lack of courage, and drew afresh upon the heavenly stores of strength and patience ever waiting for the seeking heart. Life looked gray, it must be confessed, and duty's path a rough and dusty one, as she came down from her heights and bathed her eyes by the brookside, but she meant to tread that path, turning neither to the right nor to the left, God helping her, so long as her life should last.

With pale face and heavy eyelids, yet with a sweet composure in the lines of her mouth, she crossed the threshold of her lodging.

On her table lay a package of card-board slips, — "Daily Thoughts" aunt Ellen had called them as she copied and arranged them for her darling, — and selecting one of these, with a kiss for the familiar, graceful writing, Mary tucked it in the corner of her mirror, where every morning it might

preach a little sermon to its audience of one.

O Friend, never strike sail to a fear! Come into port greatly, or sail with God the seas.

"Nobody can think it 's a 'pose,' or an affectation," thought the maiden of sorrows as she looked at the text, "for no one in Ceritas ever heard of Emerson, and nobody," — and here the girlish lip quivered a little, — "nobody but me knows enough English to understand it."

"And how does the new room please you, Mees Meh-ree, my loved one?" cried Lucina, dancing in at this moment with Chuchule on her shoulder. "Is it not a paradise, — is it not an abode for the blest? Did one ever see such a ceiling, such walls, and such a floor? Had not my cousin so long a family, — ten little ones; saints above, what a number! — you would have been more fitly lodged with her."

"Oh, this does very well, dear, and you know there was n't another corner in town, anywhere near the Garcías'; but it is a remarkable apartment, certainly," as her eye traveled over its various beauties.

It was a long room, brick-floored, of course,

but the bricks so worn away that they presented a series of mountain peaks with accompanying depressions most disconcerting to the unaccustomed foot. The walls, once white, were now splotched and smeared with brown stains, instantly suggesting murders and suicides to the fertile imagination, while the old cactus ceiling above seemed a likely place for the harboring of noxious reptiles.

Vicente, with a boy's inexplicable delight in feminine squeamishness, had told Mary a story not long before, of a centipede that once dropped from an old cactus thatch in his house on an unsuspecting sleeper beneath, and as his hearer found, on inquiry, that the incident was really not unheard of, she never after could help casting anxious as well as prayerful glances heavenward as she went to bed.

There were no gratings in their window, only the ordinary wooden shutters; and the two doors, one opening on the street, the other on the unwalled yard, where a chained pig raised his voice in lamentation, both refused to close securely, unless propped by heavy poles, which, wedged against the bricks and extending far into the floor, made another trap for the unwary foot.

The wrinkled, red-eyed crone, their landlady, had allowed them the use of a small room adjoining for the storage of trunks, and this, the girls had promptly christened "Araby the Blest," from the variety of odors that always seemed to linger there.

Lucina's cot, with its gay calico counterpane, stood at one end of the main room, Mary's at the other, and they had, for all remaining furniture, a table, a washstand, and one chair. Lucina said cheerfully that it was more or less a custom in her country to sit on the floor, and that she rather liked it, for her part; and that people who had a glass candlestick, three feet high, and such a grand picture hanging on the walls (this, by the way, was Celia's sketch of Old Maids' Hall), could hardly expect any further luxuries.

Dear Lucina; what a comfort she was to Mary; how full of tact, how sweet and sympathizing, how interested in everything that concerned her beloved companion, half friend and half teacher!

The girls had been less than a week in their new quarters, when letters came from the Masons, saying that they had just heard of Mrs. Vazquez's departure, and begging

Mary not to stay in that "forsaken country" a moment longer, but to come directly to them in Tontin. "Don't be proud, child," wrote Mrs. Mason; "the judge and I are just aching for you; this great house seems empty as a vault with my boy away, and if you must be independent, I 'm sure Rufus can get something for you to do by and by."

Mary could not but think, as she read the sweet letter, of what life might be in the gay little frontier town with such friends and such a home, but she put the temptation swiftly away with an unspoken "Retro, Satanas!"

"No," she thought, "my place is here; I do believe now, that God called me to these children, and I cannot go, I *will* not go, unless something unforeseen should happen at home, and aunt Ellen should really need me. — But I don't see what can happen, unless Celia marries, which she 's always said was most unlikely, so I shall probably stay just here to the end of the chapter, and teach Lucina's grandchildren."

. . . . . .

These nebulous little persons, be it spoken without irreverence, came near losing their

prospective hopes of existence before long, for their grandparent-to-be complained one morning of a blinding headache and pains in her limbs, dragged herself home from school the next day with difficulty, and finally crept into bed, assuring Mrs. García and the anxious Mary that she would be "very alleviated in the morning."

The long night was not half over before the watcher at her side felt well assured that several days would dawn before the promised "alleviation" could be hoped for, and when the school bell tolled next morning the little nurse set off for her duties with a heavy heart, leaving her precious charge in Mrs. García's care.

"If she grows worse, what shall I do?" thought Mary. "There's not a doctor in town, and so far as I know, not one in the district. It's fortunate to-morrow is Saturday, and if she isn't better by Sunday, I shall send for her mother, no matter what they say. Oh, if Mrs. Vazquez were only here, or if Mrs. García's baby were n't ill, or if Don Raimundo were at home, or if anything were not as it is! My dear, dear little Lucina! what a criss-cross world this seems to be!"

The sensitive, sympathetic ones among

mother to her before she goes. Hear how she calls her name. Heavenly Father, listen, and pity her! And pity me too, my Father, O my Father!"

She was still kneeling by the bedside, her head buried in the pillow, when Vicente's voice was heard at the window.

"How is my sister?" he whispered.

"I do not know, dear boy. I am not wise enough to tell. She seems quieter, but I want you to borrow a horse somewhere, and go to the ranch as fast as you can and bring back your mother. Lucina keeps calling for her, and she shall have her. Go at once and say nothing to any one."

As his steps were heard retreating Mrs. García entered, haggard with anxiety, no less for Lucina than for her own little one; but she seemed somewhat reassured at sight of the patient, and delighted to find that Mary had already done what her own cares had caused her to forget, and sent for the mother who seemed so sorely needed.

It was an anxious morning for Mary, for though Lucina really seemed better, she herself was completely overwrought, weighed down with responsibility, and exhausted with two nights' watching.

She could have cried for joy when about noon the heavy farm-wagon rolled up to the door, and a matronly figure in mourning-gown and shawl climbed quickly down and glided into the room.

"My little daughter?" she whispered, pale with anxiety, and flew to Lucina's corner, where she sank on the floor by the bedside.

A moment's quiet, a few touches with experienced hands, and she turned with a soft coo of joy, and tears glittering on her lashes. "She is better," she faltered. "See, she sleeps, and her brow is moist and cool. Come here to me, thou angel," opening her motherly arms to Mary, and forgetting the formal "you" in her emotion. "It is thou who hast tended my little one. Ah, my Vicente told me of thy goodness. Thou art one of mine now, from this day forever. Come here to me, thou precious one!"

It was not many days later when Mary stood in her doorway one morning, watching the embarkation of Lucina for Bacanuchi, whither she was going to complete her convalescence. There was cause for great joy in her patient's rapid recovery,

she was invited to the ranch herself by and by and was to take her first vacation for the trip; and yet there was a heaviness in her spirits that seemed to have no adequate cause.

"What is the matter with me?" she thought, waving good-by to the travelers. "It must be because the room looks so empty without Lucina. But I sha'n't be lonely with faithful little Cármen to sleep here every night, and Tino sticks to me like a burr since I punished him that dreadful afternoon his sister was so ill. . . . I wonder if all 's well at home, or if this is some kind of a presentiment that 's weighing me down. Nonsense! Celia used to say my presentiments were like boomerangs, — they always shot round the corner. I think I must be tired and need a long walk after school. I 'm glad it 's letter day: that 'll cheer me up. Now of course I shall have a good home-packet and I hope I shall hear from Jack Martin, — he has n't sent me a book for a fortnight, — and I do trust there 'll be a letter from that provoking Elsie Dixon."

When she came home from school that afternoon, Mrs. García had already been to the post-office, and lying on her pink bed-

cover was a goodly array of missives. . . . Yes, there was a fat square envelope from Glen Ellen; the long looked-for letter from her school friend, Elsie Dixon; nothing, oh, too bad, nothing at all from Jack, — and an envelope and a small box addressed in Mrs. Mason's writing.

The home budget was kissed and cuddled and devoured first; next Elsie's absurd scrawl taken up; then Mrs. Mason's note, — for it seemed only a note, — opened slowly, while she still laughed over Elsie's nonsense, and, . . . what was this? as her eyes traveled swiftly over the paper, . . . Oh, bitter ending to a heavy day, and to a month of sorrows. . . . "Dear Jack, poor Jack!" cried out the girlish voice, and the letter rustled to the floor.

It was almost dusk when Vicente came to the door and called her to the evening meal. She was sitting at the table writing, but he could not see her face.

"Tell Mrs. García I will not take any supper, please, Vicente," she said, without turning. "I have a bad headache and am going to bed as soon as I finish my letters for the stage to-morrow. Take Carmencita the key, will you, when you go, and ask her

not to speak to me when she comes in. I may be asleep, if my head grows better. Say good-night to the family. No, I need nothing at all, thank you, little one."

It was long before the letters were finished, sealed, and stamped that night, and when at last Mary rose from her seat, her face was pale and the black shadows under her eyes spoke of both physical and mental suffering. With a heavy sigh, she leaned on her window shutters and looked out into the night.

"Good friend, dear boy," she whispered, "by whatsoever paths you fare, may God have you in his keeping!"

The stage clattered gayly by next morning, and in the mail-bag, under the driver's seat, lay a letter addressed in rather a shaky hand to Mrs. Bertram Moore, Glen Ellen, Corona, California.

Oh, dearest aunt Ellen, [it began,] I 've been heartbroken this afternoon at hearing from Mrs. Mason of poor Jack Martin's death last week. He had a severe hemorrhage, it seems, and was ordered up to the Last Chance again for change of air. He had n't been there a week before he was so ill that the judge was sent for to take him back, and he died at their house in Tontin be-

fore his father could come. Dear Jack! I 'm so glad he had Mrs. Mason with him at the last.

She writes that he spoke of me several times, and asked her to send me a locket he had ordered for my birthday. It has come, and it is lovely, though I don't believe I could have taken it in his lifetime, for I 'm sure it 's a costly little thing. It is gold, in the shape of a heart, and has one of the agates we found at Yuma set in the back, and a bunch of forget-me-nots in blue enamel on the front. Inside there is engraved "From Jack to Mary," and below, just three words and the date, "The Tontin Stage, November, 18—."

There 's a place for a picture, and I shall put in the one that he gave me on the journey, — just his head, so bright and boyish-looking, with his cap pushed back and his wavy hair showing.

It seems strange that he had "Mary" on the locket, for he never called me anything but Miss Annesley, though I would n't have cared anyway, for he was so fragile and so young that he seemed almost like another girl to me.

There 's a slender chain with the locket, and I shall always wear it for his sake, poor, dear, suffering boy! He was so sweet and good to me on that awful journey, and I felt when I arrived in Tontin as if I 'd known him all my life.

My eyes are swollen so that I can hardly see,

with crying over Mrs. Mason's letter and the locket. I 'm glad Jack 's with his mother, now, — he missed her so; but I feel as if everybody were leaving me, first Mrs. Vazquez, then Lucina, and now my poor Jack.

Oh, aunt Ellen, do be careful of yourself and of Celia. I am weighted with sorrows, and feel as if I could n't bear another straw. I 'll send my journal next time.

Ever your MARY.

CHAPTER XV.

A BEDQUILT THERMOMETER AND OTHER MATTERS.

"THE bed-cover of the little mistress is on the pink side," cried Carmencita joyfully, peeping in, on tiptoe, at Mary's window.

"And what does that signify to thee, thou stupid?" growled her cousin, Lauro Martinez, who was in his usual surly mood.

"It signifies that my rose of Castile is happy to-day, for I have noted that when she is sad it is the brown side of her cover that is shown."

"Ah, thou and thy rose! What nonsense thou dost chatter!" and Lauro stalked away to school, leaving Cármen waiting, as usual, on the corner for the "little mistress."

It was quite true, what the loving eyes had discovered, for Mary had a whimsical fashion of changing her calico bed-cover according to her mood, turning it on the pink side, with its gay roses showing, when her

mental mercury ran high, and reversing it to the sombre, dark brown lining when the metal dropped to freezing point.

The devoted fabric had whisked about like a very weathercock of late, for Mary, greatly saddened by Jack Martin's sudden death, was therefore unusually disposed to melancholy thoughts and dark forebodings, which her loneliness, now that Mrs. Vazquez and Lucina had both gone, served but to increase.

Greater responsibilities, too, now lay upon her shoulders, for in Mr. Vazquez's absence she was obliged to assume the financial management of the school, and though the total sum involved each month was but a small one, yet it seemed formidable to her young eyes.

To pile Pelion upon Ossa, the stage-drivers also, or those in authority over them, had developed of late a tantalizing habit of confusing the mail-bags, thus sending the letters destined for Ceritas to Isleta, and vice versa. Only those who, alone in a foreign country, have awaited the arrival of a weekly post can realize what the girl endured on those luckless days when, after six days' expectation, she breathlessly pursued the

stage to the post-office, only to find alas! that the Ceritas bag was missing.

It was then that the bed-cover was rapidly shifted to the dark-brown side, and then that Mary always turned to her small shelf of books and took down Emerson's essay on "Compensation," with a manful attempt to convince herself that what was "for her" would "gravitate to her" by and by, and that in the meantime she had other blessings to offset the great disappointment.

To-day, however, the calico roses were blossoming, for it was bright spring weather, the sun was in gay and gracious mood, there were wild flowers innumerable in bloom on the hills and along the river-banks, and Mary, oh, wonderful, most wonderful, was invited to a real party!

And this was the way of it. It was the saint's day of Cármen's sister, Alejandra, on the morrow, and as such anniversaries are more celebrated than birthdays in Mexico, she was to have a surprise party.

Señor Bandini's six young lady daughters were arranging the festivity, and they but followed the universal courtesy to the "Americanita," as they called her, in asking her to make one of the company.

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mental mercury ran high, and reversing it to the sombre, dark brown lining when the metal dropped to freezing point.

The devoted fabric had whisked about like a very weathercock of late, for Mary, greatly saddened by Jack Martin's sudden death, was therefore unusually disposed to melancholy thoughts and dark forebodings, which her loneliness, now that Mrs. Vazquez and Lucina had both gone, served but to increase.

Greater responsibilities, too, now lay upon her shoulders, for in Mr. Vazquez's absence she was obliged to assume the financial management of the school, and though the total sum involved each month was but a small one, yet it seemed formidable to her young eyes.

To pile Pelion upon Ossa, the stage-drivers also, or those in authority over them, had developed of late a tantalizing habit of confusing the mail-bags, thus sending the letters destined for Ceritas to Isleta, and vice versa. Only those who, alone in a foreign country, have awaited the arrival of a weekly post can realize what the girl endured on those luckless days when, after six days' expectation, she breathlessly pursued the

stage to the post-office, only to find alas! that the Ceritas bag was missing.

It was then that the bed-cover was rapidly shifted to the dark-brown side, and then that Mary always turned to her small shelf of books and took down Emerson's essay on "Compensation," with a manful attempt to convince herself that what was "for her" would "gravitate to her" by and by, and that in the meantime she had other blessings to offset the great disappointment.

To-day, however, the calico roses were blossoming, for it was bright spring weather, the sun was in gay and gracious mood, there were wild flowers innumerable in bloom on the hills and along the river-banks, and Mary, oh, wonderful, most wonderful, was invited to a real party!

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Señor Bandini's six young lady daughters were arranging the festivity, and they but followed the universal courtesy to the "Americanita," as they called her, in asking her to make one of the company.

It was to be a morning surprise party ("who ever heard of such a thing!" thought the favored guest, as she received the invitation), and a very early morning one too. Such festivals are called "Madrugadas" in Spanish, a word which might perhaps be translated as "Dawn Parties" in this connection; and it is really a pretty idea, this of heralding the morning under a friend's window, on the day of her especial saint and protector.

"Be so kind as to be ready when we call for you, señorita," said Ynez Bandini, on the day of the invitation, as, with the customary formal embrace, she took her leave.

"Without doubt, señorita, I will not keep you waiting. Adios, and a thousand thanks for your goodness."

There was much cogitation and puzzled knitting of brows that day as to what toilet could possibly be made to serve for the occasion. Obviously, not the shrunken gray gown, which, indeed, was now past repair, and promised to the washerwoman's eldest hope; obviously, not the brown tweed, which was far too warm for spring in Sonora; certainly not either of the ginghams which aunt Ellen had just sent for

school wear, and even more certainly not the blue and white print which she had toilsomely fashioned for herself.

"It will *have* to be Celia's old white cashmere," thought Mary, "though it's darned in five places and not as clean as I could wish. I suppose I'll have to dress when I go to bed, so as not to keep them waiting, and sha'n't I be well wrinkled when I get up!"

At three o'clock the next morning, she was wakened by a particularly vicious squeal from her landlady's hungry pig, and in a moment the tinkle of guitars and harps began in the street outside, while Ynez put her head in at the window, calling gayly, "Here we are. Are you ready?"

"Oh, yes — I'm ready — soon as I wake up," answered Mary, sleepily rubbing her eyes. "Wait a moment and I'll come."

She stumbled to her dressing-table, shook out her skirts, put her curls in hasty order, and issued into the darkness with a merry greeting, her huge door-key under her arm.

A number of girls and matrons and as many young men, most of whom she had never seen, were waiting without, and they all hurried off to the Cavazos mansion.

The darkness was still intense and the breath of the dreaming flowers heavy with dew, as they reached Alejandra's window, and it seemed to Mary like a scene in an opera as the musicians struck up a lively air, and the young men began sending off rockets and lighting firecrackers.

It was not long before the maiden herself appeared at the window, fully dressed and apparently not in the least surprised, and smilingly receiving the huzzas and greetings of her guests, at once invited them within. They were hardly seated in the wooden chairs set so primly around the room, when the musicians, throwing back their sarapes and smiling behind heavy mustaches at the company, glided into a waltz in which the rhythmic beat of the harp followed, and supported the swift melody of the violin and guitar. The tune was "La Media Noche" (Midnight) and its cadence was so alluring, its time so perfect, the sway of the players' figures so contagious, that any one would have danced whether he knew how or not; old Don Alberto would have pirouetted if he had been there, and even a cripple with two wooden legs would have made shift to skip about.

A beardless youth with no collar, and a somewhat disheveled head, who had been looking at the Americanita with apparent approval, asked finally for the honor of her hand in the dance, and they whirled giddily about the brick floor among the other waltzers, round and round, and round and round, till Mary, at least, felt like a bluebottle fly on a hot summer afternoon.

"You would dance very well, señorita, with a little more practice," said the collarless youth condescendingly, as he seated her.

"In-deed!" soliloquized the maiden with a withering glance. "I suppose you thought because I objected to going round the same way all the morning, that I did n't know how to dance. I wish," with a sigh, "Don Raimundo were here!" for in the fortnight before the revolution they had taken many little spins together, in the intervals for rest while Lucina was learning the latest fashionable steps.

Dawn had peeped in at the window during the first waltz of the Madrugada, and now light refreshments were served and the dancing began anew. It was more agreeable, thought Mary, to look on than to par-

ticipate, so she declined a second invitation from her beardless gallant, and watched with sincerest admiration the sway of the lithe figures, the twinkle of the arched feet, and the peculiar grace of motion which distinguishes the dancers in Spanish countries everywhere.

At the usual breakfast hour they were invited to the dining-room for a grand repast and then the festival was over, Mary hurrying away to school with a bewildered sensation of complete uncertainty as to either the hour, the year, or the season.

She was worn out when dusk began to fall, with the interminable length of the day as well as with the unusual character of the festivities, yet she felt that she must go at least as far as the river to watch again, with fascinated eyes, the "Novena de la Santa Cruz,"[1] which came to an end that evening. Night after night, as the sun sank below the Window Mountain, she had seen groups of women gathering in the narrow Ceritas streets, and climbing slowly to various points on the high hills back of the town. The foremost among them always bore a table, others a large cross decorated with flowers,

[1] Nine Days' Worship of the Holy Cross.

others still, bouquets, wreaths, and garlands of blossoms.

Toiling painfully to the top of the high hill, as, the watcher thought with tear-filled eyes, the great Cross-Bearer himself had done so long ago, they cleared a place for the table, set the holy emblem in position, wreathed it with blossoms, and fell upon their knees in adoration. Each evening, as their prayers, in a high-pitched monotone, floated down the hillside, and as the chanting began, one long line of women answering the other antiphonally, Mary's heart throbbed with responsive devotion, and she worshiped, too, on her heap of stones by the river-side.

To-night all the surrounding hilltops were crowned with groups of dark figures, and on one lofty eminence, the highest of all, the worshipers had built a fire behind the object of their devotion, and knelt about it chanting. The brilliant flames against the dusky evening sky, the wreaths of pale smoke, the arms of the cross showing as if sketched in charcoal against the blaze, gave a weird, mysterious effect to the scene, and made one think of the uncanny rites of fire-worshipers, rather than of a religious service in modern Mexico.

"I see," said Mary to herself, as she sauntered thoughtfully homeward, "why they worship the cross on the hilltops, — it is to remember Calvary; but I wonder why the service is held just at this season of the year."

"Doña Panchita," she asked, dropping down on that lady's doorstep for a moment's chat as she passed, "why do they fix upon this particular time for the Novena de la Santa Cruz?"

Mrs. García was sitting at her window with one of her ten in her arms, but she turned to the girl with a sweet, motherly smile.

"So you 've been on the hills again," she said. "I could not go to-night, for Catalina does not seem quite well.

"How can it be that you should not know why the worship is held at this time? Ah, I forgot, you have not the happiness to belong to the true faith. Well, I will tell you gladly, for it is a blessed story and one that all should know."

"The date, Mees Mariquita" — impressively — "was adopted by Catholics generations ago, to commemorate the finding of the true cross. It seems that the special piece

of wood on which the Holy One was crucified was lost, or perhaps mislaid among the others on Mount Calvary, and thus great confusion was caused and much sorrow to the hearts of the faithful, who spared no effort to bring about the identification of the precious relic. It came to pass that in the midst of this uncertainty there arose a wonderful clairvoyant named Elena, who was reported to be particularly gifted in feats of identification and track-finding. To Calvary, the faithful conducted this woman, and on the third of May, be the date forever sacred, she found three crosses lying together, which she ordered thrown upon a fire, explaining that they were those of the Christ and the two thieves who suffered with him, and that the unsanctified crosses would be consumed while the holy relic itself would suffer no change. It came to pass as she had prophesied, blessed be her name, and in commemoration of her wonderful powers, she was canonized after her death as 'Santa Elena, la Rastrera.' "

"Saint Ellen, the Pathfinder, — that would not be a bad name for my dear saint in Corona," thought Mary as she strolled to her lodging. — "Dear me!" stopping sud-

denly, "how strange and how very, very pretty!"

Beside the barber's house across the way, a kind of picturesque white tent had been set up, trimmed inside and out with fresh green branches. Pink tarlatan curtains, edged with lace, veiled the opening of the tent, and red and blue ribbons were everywhere festooned. A saint's picture hung at the back, surrounded by rosy clouds of the gauzy fabric looped over great white shells, while in front of the picture a high altar was set, draped in white and adorned with burning tapers, flowers, and oranges.

The little shelter was filled with kneeling women, silently praying, and the soft pink veil that hung between them and the bystanders gave the whole scene the effect of a rose-lighted tableau.

"What is it, oh, what is it, señora?" Mary whispered, grasping the sleeve of a black-robed figure gliding under the curtains.

The person addressed turned in surprise, but recognizing the Americanita answered softly, "It is a velorio,[1] daughter, the devotion of our neighbor to her saint. We pray

[1] Provincial word — a "watch-night" of praise and prayer.

with her, as becomes good friends and good Christians."

Little Cármen, who was waiting at the door of the lodging, gave the same explanation, and said that the devotion would last through the night, and that by and by tezgüin (a native drink made of fermented cracked corn, flavored, spiced, and sweetened) would be served to all the worshipers.

"Was it not most beautiful, Mees Mariquita?" she cried. "I could have remained there all the night looking at the flowers and the lights and the people. Doña Alejandra is a good Christian indeed!"

Mary agreed that it was beautiful, and while people still streamed by her window, intent on seeing the velorio, she jotted down for her home journal a few notes of the two ceremonies she had just witnessed.

"Oh, that I had Celia's talent for sketching!" she thought, lingering over her writing; "with a few strokes of her pencil she could give an idea of the whole lovely scene, so that aunt Ellen could tell just how everything looked. Ah, well, we cannot all be so gifted," with a sigh, as she put away her notebook.

Next morning dawned and there was no

envy, even of the friendliest kind, of anybody's gifts, for it was fair and sunny and bewitching as ever a May morning could be, and as it was Saturday, she had promised to go with all the school-girls for a long ramble. The excursion proved to be all that had been expected, — a delightful, old-time play-day, whose diversions were running races, skipping stones, and wading in the brook, — from which everybody came back at noon, warm and breathless, laden with great bunches of wonderful wild flowers.

Vicente met the chief reveller at her door on her return with a thin package about a foot square, neatly wrapped in brown paper, and addressed as usual in Celia's hand to Miss Mary Annesley, in care of Señor Don Emilio Vazquez.

"They 've just brought a bag of newspapers and bundles back from Isleta," the lad explained. "It 's the mail that went astray last week, but the letters won't be here till this afternoon."

Mary untied and rolled up the string and folded back the paper with careful hands.

"Why, what in the world" — she cried, for there lay an exquisite sketch in black and white of the Old Maids' Hall of the

future, an exact copy in miniature of that magnificent building as it appeared in the painting hanging upon her dingy walls.

No, not an exact copy, for behold all the banners in this second picture hung mournfully at half-mast!

"Ha, ha, ha, ha," laughed Mary merrily, startling the squeaking bats in the thatch, "it 's Celia's way of announcing that one of the regiment has deserted. How awfully trying that I can't have any letters till this afternoon. I wonder who it can be!"

"O—h!" with a prolonged breath, as a second sketch was lifted to the light, "my prophetic soul! is this intended for the 'princess'?"

In the centre of the picture stood a tall graceful figure in a trailing gown, whose right hand held a dainty handkerchief to her blushing cheeks, while the other, slightly extended, bore on its third finger a mammoth solitaire whose rays streamed to the very edge of the cardboard.

It was undoubtedly Celia, although the face was hidden. The pose was her very own; a coronet, — this touch evidently in memory of Mary's pet name for her — encircled her sleek, dark head, and yes, — there

was something written in microscopic letters in the lower left-hand corner.

Mary carried it to the window and read, with a laugh which turned into a sob, and that into a choke, —

"If you sit in the chimney-corner long enough, your Jonathan 'll come to you, — that 's what aunt Easter used to say."

CHAPTER XVI.

BACANUCHI.

"HAPPINESS," mused Mary half aloud, "is rather like a spirit-level, is n't it? — the least change of base sets the sensitive liquid within trembling, wavering to and fro."

Don Andrés, by whose side she was seated in the great farm-wagon, glanced at her, but respected her reverie, as well as the foreign tongue, and Tino and Vicente behind continued to shout in deafening duet the refrain of the Mexican national hymn: —

"Y retiemble en su centro la tierra
Al sonoro rugir del cañon." [1]

"You will both tremble to your centres in about two minutes, boys," growled their uncle good-humoredly, "if you keep on screaming like Apaches into your teacher's very ear."

A week's vacation had been declared in the little Ceritas school, and Mary with her

[1] Let the earth shake again to its centre
At the sonorous roar of thy cannon.

precious guitar and a number of dropsical bundles, accompanied by the boys in obstreperously high spirits, was nearing the end of her twenty-mile drive to Bacanuchi.

It had been a beautiful road they had followed through a fertile and beautiful country, and as it was the first time Mary had left Ceritas since she arrived, the change had proved most welcome.

They had crossed innumerable clear brooks and running streams during the day, passed countless grain-fields, just turning yellow, groves of splendid cottonwoods, and everywhere seen cacti of every size, blazing with their gorgeous purple, red, and yellow flowers, — here, the tiny, thorny doll's pincushion, just peeping above ground, there the giant sahuaro, with its monster arms extended.

They had traveled, too, through half a dozen picturesque, tumble-down hamlets, one in particular perched on a cliff like a Rhine village, above a swift-flowing river, with its little church on a steep higher still. Goats had peeped over the summits as they approached, and fuzzy gray donkeys, laden with skins of water, balanced each side their pack saddles, were toiling up the rocks, their

dark driver turning with an "Ave María, amigo," as Don Andrés rattled by.

"Apaches?" cried Mary, breaking suddenly from her reverie. "Were you talking about Apaches, Don Andrés?"

"Only telling the boys that they shouted like the red devils, señorita."

"Have they troubled you much of late years, sir?"

"No, not seriously; all the tribes are quieter now, but in my father's time, — Ay! Dios!" with an expressive gesture. "Have you noted the heaps of stones we have passed to-day? Each one marks the spot where some brave Indian fighter fell, señorita. It is not the Apaches alone that have ravaged poor Sonora, but the Pápagos also, the Ceris, and above all, the Yaquis. You have heard of Cajeme, the famous Yaqui chief — no? Many of the ranches have Indian names in this region, — Cuchuta, Turicachi, Bámori, Basochuca, Bacanuchi. *Ba* means water in the Opata dialect, you know."

"Thou wilt tell us some Indian tales when we get home, wilt thou not, little uncle?" cried Tino, with a choking embrace from behind.

"Let me go, lad, and sit down, or I 'll make thee walk the rest of the way. Watch now, señorita, for it is about the hour that they promised to meet us."

"Lucina and Doña Rosita? Oh, how delightful!"

"Yes, and your friend, Señor Altamirano, too. He is just from the mines, and brings letters from Emilio and Barbarita."

"Raimundo!" exclaimed the boys, while Mary looked her pleasure. "Raimundo! Blessed be all the saints! Now, *why* not have told us before, little uncle?"

"What opportunity have I had to tell thee anything with thy shouts and thy cries and thy songs? Besides, I have an idea that he wanted to surprise some of you," with a side glance at Mary. "Tumble down, boys, quickly now, there they are!"

The little group indeed appeared at this moment, Lucina, a perfect magnolia blossom in her white gown, running toward the wagon with cries of delight. Doña Rosita, wrapped in her inevitable black shawl, wisely stood still to receive the onslaught and the fierce embraces of her sons, and Raimundo, with bared head and radiant smile, hastened to assist Miss Annesley to alight.

"Oh, Lucina, thou dear one, how well thou dost look!"

"Ay, Mees Mariquita mia, what joy to see you!" were the first words that issued half inaudible from the close embrace.

"Don't you dare to call me 'Miss' any longer, Lucina," whispered Mary; "we 're friends now, and I want my home name here.

"Don Raimundo," turning with extended hand to that cavalier, "I did not half greet you when you helped me down. I am so glad to see you after all this time. You are well?"

"In perfect health, and at your feet, as always, Mariquita," using the pretty phrase with the native grace of his people.

By this time Mrs. Mariscal had come up, and with a warm embrace repeated Lucina's welcome, and, as the wagon had rattled along by this time, they all set off down the hill, everybody talking at once, and Faustino stopping to turn occasional somersaults of joy, followed by shrill shrieks, like an engine blowing off steam.

The ranch house lay at the foot of the hill, — a simple place enough, but beautifully set in a soft green valley, beside an immense

cottonwood that spread its branches over the dwelling beneath, as an eagle shadows its nest. A white, turbulent brook foamed along a few rods from the door, the fences everywhere were wreathed with blooming clematis, and over the entrance was a porch of rough poles, roofed with green boughs, where two wood doves cooed in a wicker cage.

Mrs. Mariscal took Mary into her arms again as she crossed the threshold.

"Welcome, daughter mine," she cried, "it is a poor place, but it is at your orders."

The mud walls within were not even whitewashed, the floors were of earth, but the straw mats, or esteras, that partially covered them were fresh and dainty, and everything was immaculately clean.

Mary's room, the abode of honor, was provided with a grand brass bedstead, and the gratings of her deeply recessed windows were swept by the soft green boughs without. When the fortunate guest sank to sleep there in the summer evening, she felt as if her load of cares had all dropped from her shoulders as Christian's did, when he came up with the cross, and to the lullaby

of rustling leaves and rippling brook she slept as she had not done since her protectors left Ceritas.

She was dreaming that she was a wild flower with the rain softly falling on her petals, when she wakened to see Lucina's mischievous face pressed against her window-bars, and her dripping hands just about to precipitate another shower.

"Awake, you little sleeper,
The cuckoo calls you loud."

she sang in her careful English.

"I've been up an hour," dropping into conversation, "and here 's a great olla[1] of lovely fresh water for you from the brook. May I bring it in?"

Oh, how sweet it was to bathe in the cool water, so lately from the stream that it seemed still dancing and rippling, how sweet was the June air blowing in her window the breath of leagues of grass and flowers, how strange and tender the coo, coo of the doves in the porch, how delightful to feel herself a part of the big, merry, affectionate household, and how pleasant to be again the recipient of Raimundo's graceful courtesies.

[1] Earthen jar.

"He seems positively cheerful," thought Mary, "and quite young and boyish. It would hardly be appropriate to call him the Knight of the Rueful Countenance any longer. I wonder what's the matter with him. It must be the country air, I suppose."

"Come, my Meh-ree," cried Lucina, after breakfast. "Come, boys, come, Mamácita, come, everybody; we are going out to see all the beauties of Bacanuchi."

"Take the señorita to the Indian huts first, Lucina," called Raimundo, who was smoking under the cottonwood.

"The ranch is worked by peones, you know, Mariquita," explained Mrs. Mariscal, as they set out, "most of them Yaquis and all of them Christians, or semi-Christians. Andrés has them live a little below here, across the brook in a settlement all together, and Raimundo seems to want you to see it, though I don't know why, for there's nothing interesting about it."

Mary's unaccustomed eyes were delighted, however, with the picturesque scene that greeted them as they neared the settlement. Dusky, wrinkled squaws were kneeling by the brook, pounding the linen of the great

WASHERWOMEN AT BACANUCHI

house on smooth stones, the bubbles and lather from the soap floating like foam-bells in the smooth pool below; gray-skinned, hairless dogs, or "bichis," flew barking from the huts; a quantity of fresh meat, hung on ropes, was drying in the sunshine; dirty, half-naked children played about the doors, and several young girls, with greasy black fringes of hair hanging to their eyebrows, were busily grinding shelled corn in hollow stone vessels.

"That stone implement they hold in their hands is called a mano, Mariquita, and the vessel is a metate," said Mrs. Mariscal, stopping to look at them. "Now they will boil that corn with a little slaked lime in the water, wash it until the skin comes off, and grind it on the metate again to make meal for tortillas de maiz. That is just the way I have it done at the house. And then they cook the tortillas on an earthen dish, or a piece of iron heated over the blaze."

"Tortillas de maiz very good," grunted one of the girls, looking up from her labors.

"It seems hard enough work to make them," commented Mary, "they ought to be good. . . .

"Oh, are n't those particularly hideous little dogs! Their horrid bare skins and the few hairs cropping out here and there give one the creeps."

"They are very much prized," said Lucina, "and they are supposed," with a shiver of repulsion, "to be a sure cure for consumption if they sleep with you at night. I have always said I 'd rather die at once, for my part. Come mamá, there are too many dogs and babies here. Let us go to the orchards."

The Indian huts into which they peeped here and there, on their way back, were clean, but bare of furniture, evidently being regarded as shelters only, although in each one was a picture of the patron saint and several smoothly woven petates.[1]

"The Yaqui wants but little here below. A metate and a petate are all he needs to set up housekeeping," laughed Raimundo, who met them as they were turning into the apricot orchard. "Are you so hungry that you must have fruit or die, ladies? for Don Andrés is going up the cañon after wood with Azabache and Copeton,[2] and the boys

[1] Mats made of palm fibre.

[2] Jet and Cropple Crown.

want you to come and ride in the ox-cart."

"Oh, that will be gay!" cried Lucina, "but is it safe for Meh-ree, do you think, the oxen are so wild?"

"I think so. Your uncle understands the beasts, and I will go to manage the boys. I'll bring them all back safe, Doña Rosita, if you'll let them go."

"I have no doubt of you, Raimundo. Go in peace, children!" with a wave of the hand.

Azabache and Copeton, small wiry little oxen yoked by the horns and driven with a crooked stick, sauntered placidly up the cañon through the avenue of willows, rather as if they had intended going there any way, than as if obedient to their master's commands; and, arrived at their destination, while the cart was being loaded the girls and their cavalier rested in the dappled shade by the brookside.

"You have not said a word to me yet about my cousin's engagement, Lucina," cried Mary suddenly, as they munched the piñones (pine-nuts) with which their pockets were filled. "And I wrote you how much I wanted sympathy. It was such a dreadful

shock and surprise, and I did n't get my letters of explanation for hours after those pictures came."

"Such a shock!" smiled Lucina. "Why mamá said as soon as I read her your letter that she 'd expected it from the first."

"Expected it?" in astonishment. "Why, how could she, when she did n't know them?"

"Ah, but I had told her all about them, and she knew your cousin was young and beautiful, and her neighbor," — this in a very grown-up tone, — "young and wanting nothing but a wife."

"That is n't the same thing as getting one," commented Raimundo. "How is this, Mariquita; has the lovely cousin you so often described deserted the Sisterhood of Spinsters she joined so formally, and will she never occupy the grand mansion you showed me? Ah, what a grievous breach of faith! Well say the poets that women's promises are writ in water!"

"You must n't laugh, Don Raimundo," with a frown and a blush. "You don't know how hard it has been for me. Just think, I never even saw Mr. Hunter, the man she 's going to marry, and it does seem so impos-

sible that every thought of her life now should be centred in this perfect stranger, or one who was a perfect stranger a year ago. And think of all the promises and solemn vows she made me never to marry! Oh, I 'm jealous, I know it," and she brushed away a tear, "but I try to overcome it and I *do* love her so."

"Pobrecita!" (poor little one) murmured Raimundo, and Lucina touched her hand with a swift caress.

"It upsets all my future plans, too," plaintively, "and the great 'career' I was going to have. If Celia marries, I must go home and take care of my aunt, of course, and though that would be a joy as well as a duty, it will be very difficult to find the kind of work I can do in Corona. I wanted," half laughing, "to make a fortune for my family and take it with me in doubloons when I went back to California."

"Meh-ree!" gasped Lucina, turning a little pale, "you are not thinking of leaving us?"

"Mariquita, you are not really going?" exclaimed Raimundo.

"Oh, no, I hope not; certainly not at present, anyway, for Celia says she will

never marry until my aunt's affairs are settled in such a way that she can have her home free of encumbrance, and have enough to live on in some comfort."

"And what does the lover say to that?" asked Raimundo, with a smile at this frank statement of family affairs.

"He wants them both, and me, too, to give up Glen Ellen and come to him this Christmas, but my aunt is not willing to do that, and neither am I," with a toss of her curly head. "I am young and strong, and I can work for both of us."

"Brave little woman!" murmured Raimundo, "you deserve" —

"Lucina! Mees Meh-ree! Raimundo!" shouted Vicente from the cart at this juncture. "Are you all deaf? I've been calling you for five minutes. Uncle is ready and Azabache is fretting to be gone."

The girls, protesting that they had only just come and that it could n't be nearly time to go home, scrambled upon the wood as best they could, and the oxen set off, running like frolicsome calves. Not a vestige of the calmness with which they had come up the cañon was now to be seen; they were agile, headstrong, reckless, thinking only of

OX-CART WITH AZABACHE AND COPETON

dinner, deaf to their drivers' commands, and heedless of the shouts of Raimundo and the boys who ran beside them, panting.

They had crossed the brook twenty-one times coming up the cañon, as Mary had counted, and all these shallow fords had now to be made again, with the disadvantage of an insecure perch on a shaky load of wood. Mary held to the cart on one side and clutched Lucina's hand on the other, half frightened, half elated by the swift motion, but not a saint remained in the calendar upon whose protection the latter maiden did not call before the journey was accomplished.

The oxen galloped on at full speed, running over stumps and under trees, splashing through pools, knocking off Mary's hat, tearing Lucina's reboso from her head, racing wildly through a meadow waving with flowers, crossing with breakneck speed the plain in front of the house, and finally, with a last explosion of energy, dragged the whole load, girls and all, into the very middle of the stream, where they stood with heaving flanks and drooping heads.

Raimundo, breathless and laughing, waded

in after them, and held up his arms to carry the disheveled damsels to shore.

"I have heard of Europa's ride on the white bull," he said, "but this was like to have been an even more adventurous journey."

CHAPTER XVII.

MOONLIGHT AND STORY-TELLING.

It was evening at Bacanuchi; a yellow summer moon hung halfway up the heavens; the ripples of the brook shone like molten silver; the mocking-birds fluted and trilled and rhapsodized over in the orchard, and from the Indian huts floated a quavering song that thrilled the ear with its strange beauty.

"Ay, Manavei! Ay, Manavei!" sang the high falsetto voices, the last notes prolonged in octave until the sounds fainted and died trembling away. It was a "testiguin" they were crooning, one of those strange minor melodies half song, half chant, whose cadences betray an alien race, an alien thought, and breathe a heavy unconscious melancholy.

The family was gathered on the grass in the warm June moonlight, Don Andrés smoking, and the boys unwontedly quiet, one at his mother's knee, the other perched

on the arm of his uncle's chair. Lucina sat on the ground, with her head on Mary's knee; Raimundo, near them, idly touched the guitar with his supple fingers, and in the background crouched one or two of the house servants, their heads as usual shrouded in rebosos.

"Would that Emilio and Barbarita were here!" sighed Doña Rosita.

"Would they were!" echoed Raimundo, "but I hardly think they can return before August, at the rate they are traveling now."

"I wish not only they, but every one I ever knew, could have been at Bacanuchi this heavenly week," cried Mary impetuously. "How my aunt and cousin would have enjoyed it! and Lucina," in a lowered tone, "I always think when I hear the peones singing, how my friend, 'el Señor Jack,' as you used to call him, would have delighted in their music. He was perfectly fascinated with the two or three Spanish songs we heard in Tontin."

"Poor boy, may he rest in peace!" breathed Lucina softly, glancing at the forget-me-not locket, as it shone on Mary's neck.

A little silence fell upon the group, though

no one had heard the half-whispered words of the two girls, and in the interval the caged doves upon the wall rustled and cooed a soft complaint.

"Sing one of your English songs, will you not, Mariquita?" begged Raimundo, handing her the guitar; "sing 'Annie Laurie,' — is not that the name?"

"It shall be a duet, then," answered the girl. "Lucinita knows all the words now. Sing, dear one, with me."

As the last "I 'd lay me down and die" faded into the air, Mary said reflectively, fingering the Mexican eagle as it swung from the guitar ribbons, "I don't seem to care as much as I used, somehow, about singing in English. I believe I 'm infatuated with Spanish, with its lilt, its musical cadence, the rise and fall of its long words, the liquid way it pours out, its sonorous syllables when you want to say anything magnificent, the pretty way it has of putting things, its tender diminutives, — oh, I love them all!"

"That is a charming tribute to the Castilian, señorita," said Raimundo with an admiring glance, "and of course we can but think it well deserved."

"It is the most beautiful language in the world, sir," cried Don Andrés, knocking the ash from his cigarrito, and thus accidentally launched upon his favorite subject, he sailed off with tremendous impetus.

The boys, inwardly restive under this, to them, extremely abstract conversation, listened with respectful gravity, but Tino took advantage of the first pause to say plaintively, "You *promised* to tell us some Indian tales before we went back to school, little uncle, and it is the last night."

"What? Indian tales?" stopped in mid-career, and returning with difficulty to every-day matters. "So I did, my boy, but you know all mine since long ago. Ask Raimundo there, his men in the mines must have told him mountains of them."

"Raimundo shall tell afterwards, if he will, but first, little dear uncle, tell about grandpapa and the spider web."

"Oh yes, oh yes! the spider web!" cried Vicente, dancing up and down. "I had almost forgotten it."

"Well, sit down, then, boys. I cannot talk unless you are quiet. It is a story of my father's youth, señorita," turning to Mary. "Rosita here has often heard him

tell it, and knows that he would never suffer a spider to be killed anywhere about the ranch.

"Listen then, little sons, and hear of thy grandfather's deliverance."

THE STORY OF THE SPIDER WEB.

The Yaquis, you know, children, are physically the finest Indians that we have in Sonora, and we call them "the arms of the state." They are good farmers and miners, good workers in every way when they are not at war; and in other days, when it was the custom to hire them to convoy the silver trains to the settlements, they always kept their contracts honestly, and could be trusted to beat off the Apache raiders, for they are splendid fighters, as we have good reason to know.

They were early Christianized, in the ordinary sense of the term, and I am not sure but that the government would have had less difficulty with them in times past, if the meddlesome ones among the priests had kept their hands off the converts. However, that is as it may be; — the real cause of trouble between the Mexicans and the Yaquis from the first has been the rich lands

they held on the Yaqui River. The Indians have never been able to adjust their titles to modern law, and in consequence they have always had to fight the covetousness of their neighbors.

The regular troops have been sent against them on many occasions and been beaten too, sometimes, though they have often succeeded in storming their adobe forts and capturing their leaders. Cajeme, their famous chief, was killed, you know, while trying to escape from the soldiers; but still, in spite of their losses, the Yaquis have never been subdued.

Well, one season many years ago, the tide of battle ran against them, and they retreated before the troops up the Yaqui River to the desolate Sierra Madre ranges, where they knew every rock and pass, and could not be dislodged.

When all was quiet once more, when the soldiers had departed, and their lands were all occupied, they sallied down again and drove off the settlers, and then spread over the country, attacking and robbing lonely hamlets here and there, probably in revenge for their wrongs.

Among other places, they descended upon

Bacanuchi, and as your great-grandfather, luckily enough, was not at home, not having heard that the devils had risen, they met with very little resistance. My grandmother and the younger children were warned in time, and managed to escape to the next ranch; so the redskins got what they really wanted, which was horses and grain, and made off with their booty.

But some of them had seen my father, who had been guarding the horses, — a lad of sixteen years perhaps, then, — running up the cañon like the wind when he heard their war whoops. There was no time for pursuit at the moment, but when all was over, two or three of the braves started to kill or capture him, fearing, probably, that he would spread the alarm through the country. Doubtless it was child's play for them to trace him with a lifetime of such work behind them, though the poor lad had doubled on his tracks, waded along the streams, and tried in every way he knew to deceive them. They followed him like bloodhounds, though, and at last he could see from the rocks, where he lay panting and exhausted, the ripple that ran through the branches as they parted them below in the valley.

He could run no farther, and looking around despairingly, with an agonized prayer for deliverance in his heart, there, just within sight, lay a great hollow log half covered with grass and leaves. It was the only possible refuge and seemed a poor one enough at best, but he forced himself into the opening, heels first, lifting the grasses and smoothing the earth after him as well as he could, and lay there with the worms and the wood-lice, as silent as they.

Now it happened, thanks to the most Holy Virgin and the glorious saints, that a spider began to spin her blessed web over the end of the log as he crouched there, trembling, and when it was finished, a passing shower fell and filled it with crystal drops.

The Indians came along in due time, swift and sure on their noiseless feet, and his track having mysteriously disappeared, as it seemed, they sat down on that very log to rest a bit.

Doubtless they saw the spider web, and took the drops glistening upon it to be the morning dew not yet dried away in that cool retreat. Whatever they may have thought, it is certain that they never suspected they were seated almost upon the body of their

trembling quarry, so after a time they made off again, and at nightfall he crawled from his shelter and thanked his God for the spider's protection.

"And the grandpapa would never have a spider killed, nor a web touched in the house, after that day, boys," exclaimed Doña Rosita. "When it came to my sainted mother's time, if she desired to have the rooms cleaned, she must attend to it in his absence."

"Ah, that was a good story," sighed Vicente, with a deep breath of satisfaction. "Now more Indians, more Indians, Raimundo, if you please."

"Shall I tell thee about the attack the Apaches once made on the Manzanas sheep-ranch? One of my guides gave me the story while we were riding over the hills the other day."

"Oh, yes, an Apache tale, they are always good," cried the boys, settling themselves in expectant attitudes.

"You are not tired of Indians, Mariquita? Very well, then, I 'll go on with the Moonlight Night's Entertainment," said Raimundo.

THE TALE OF THE GRATEFUL SQUAW.

My guide, Don Manuel María Torres, of Tontin, and I were riding near the ruins of the Manzanas Mission one afternoon, when we came upon a circular inclosure about twenty feet in diameter and four feet high, with only one large opening, that apparently served as entrance. The wall was made up of massive boulders, and here and there among them breaches had been left, which had evidently served to shoot from while protected by the fortification.

I was naturally interested, and asked Don Manuel if he knew when and for what purpose this fort-like inclosure had been built.

His eyes flashed and he answered quickly, "I know what it was used for once, when I received what came near being my death wound." He then went on to tell me — he is a great story-teller, — that back in the forties, when the country belonged to Mexico, a small body of troops under the command of Don Hilarion García, a famous Indian fighter, was stationed at the Tontin presidio, and was chiefly used to defend the settlers against the savages.

The Tumacácori and Manzanas Indian

missions had been entirely depopulated, so he said, by the long-continued raids of the Apaches, and their lands had therefore been granted by the government to Don Estévan Carrillo, who had established a large sheep-ranch thereon. The settlement was still frequently descended upon by the tribe, whose stronghold was the neighboring mountains, but it managed to hold along in some way; and the herders had built, besides the defenses at Manzanas, several fortifications on prominent hills, from which they watched their sheep and defended them from marauding bands of savages.

Now it seems that Carrillo, the owner of the ranch, was a kind and a merciful man, and finding one day on the hills, as he rode among his sheep, an Apache squaw with a papoose by her side, apparently deserted by her tribe, and in a dying condition, he took her before him on his horse, and carried her to the ranch.

She was nursed and tended, and when she recovered, went back to the mountains with her child, — a weakly little thing; but not until, in her half-unintelligible way, she had sworn the eternal gratitude of Nashpévah — that was her name — to the whole Carrillo family.

Well, one cold winter's night the Tontin presidio was thrown into great excitement by the sound of the drum, a general alarm which summoned all able-bodied men to appear at the garrison armed and mounted. My guide, Señor Torres, was one of those who obeyed the call; and upon arriving, he was told that an Apache squaw had just arrived from the Chiricahua mountains, having been on the road two days and two nights without food; and had told the commandant that the day before she left the Indian camp, a party of fifty braves had gone on the war path, and that their objective point was Carrillo's sheep-ranch at Manzanas.

It was found upon further questioning that the ghastly, haggard creature was no other than Nashpévah, the squaw whom Carrillo had befriended, and when she had told her story she sank to the ground, fainting with exhaustion.

Don Hilarion resolved to go to the rescue of the ranch, and with forty of his best men and ten of the bravest neighbors, among whom was my guide, he started that same night, riding sixty-five miles by early dawn. Arrived within the walls at Manzanas,

García and his men took but a short rest, and swallowed a mouthful of breakfast, for several signal fires had already been observed on the neighboring hills, and an attack was expected by sunrise.

It fell out as they feared; the Apaches, shouting that terrible war whoop of theirs, fell upon the ranch early in the morning, but as my guide graphically remarked, "Vinieron por lana y salieron trasquilados." [1]

They descended in a body to annihilate a feeble body of herders, as they thought, but thanks to the message of the grateful squaw, they were greeted instead by the fire of fifty men.

Señor Torres said that the braves were actually paralyzed with astonishment for a moment, and stood wavering under the terrible fire, uncertain what to do. About twenty of them were shot down on the attack, twelve more on the pursuit, and six of the finest warriors, who had climbed into the stone fortification, fought like demons till their ammunition was exhausted, when — 't was the fortune of war, boys, we must all expect it — they were captured and shot on the spot.

[1] "They came for wool and went back shorn themselves."

"Brave Nashpévah," cried Mary. "Was n't that splendid! I wonder what became of her and if she ever went back to her tribe."

"Oh no, she could not have done that," answered Don Andrés. "She would know too well that such a course would mean instant death. Her child had probably died, — she would never have deserted it, that is certain, — and she was resolved to spend her last breath in the service of those who had once befriended it and her."

"She was a faithful creature," said Doña Rosita, "no matter what color she was, and she held love and gratitude above the claims of blood and kindred."

"Oh, tell us just one more story, Raimundo," pleaded Lucina. "Tell us that about 'One-eyed Tutije,' — you remember? You heard it at the Mababi ranch."

"No," said her mother decidedly, "you hear of no more Indians to-night, either one-eyed or two-eyed. Look at Faustinito, talking of eyes. He resembles nothing so much as a horned owl, with his hair standing up straight on his head. Run along, my children. You have a long drive to Ceritas to-morrow. Good-night, every one! I must look after my little ones. Come, Lucina!"

"Good-night," said Mary. "I shall never forget this lovely evening, Doña Rosita, nor my visit to this dear place. . . . Ah, the moon is brighter than ever, is it not, and bed seems an absurdity. 'Must we leave thee, Paradise?'"

"The last evening we talked so late was at your window, the night of my little affair with the revolutionists, do you remember, Mariquita?"

"Remember? Oh, yes, and how frightened I was, and how long ago it seems! . . . Yes, yes, I 'm coming, Lucina. Good-night then, Raimundo. It is a better good-night than that last one, no?"

"Better, indeed. Good-night, little friend. Sleep sweetly."

Mary's light step crossed the threshold. She was gone, and the Knight of the Rueful Countenance mused in the moonlight, while the mocking birds still fluted in the orchard.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MIDSUMMER DAYS.

JUNE days had softly slipped away and the glory of midsummer rested on Sonora. Everywhere doves, mocking birds, cardinals hung in their cages on the brown walls, cooing and lilting in the sunshine, and the landlady's green paroquet shrieked from morning till night, "Café, mamá! café, mamá!" as he writhed and twisted on his perch. The red-winged blackbirds thronged the cactus fences by day, singing in their rough voices a melody that always sounded to Mary like a passage in the overture to "Lucia," and at evening, music was heard from harp or guitar along the streets and at the door of almost every humble dwelling.

The bats squeaked merrily all the hours of light in the old cactus ceiling, and at dusk swooped in clouds through open window and door, but Mary had grown somewhat wonted by this time to these con-

stant home companions, and really grieved when occasionally she found a rash victim of thirst drowned in her earthen water-pitcher.

Fruit and vegetables were plenty now, a welcome addition to the simple meals, and as the girls strolled by the blank, expressionless houses, they could see through the arched entrances, their great doors set wide open to the summer, the sunrise flush of tangled sweet peas and poppies in every bright garden beyond.

The long-expected thunderstorms had begun, rolling, crashing, pealing, almost every afternoon, and torrents of rain poured down the chimney of Mary's room, sweeping out upon the floor and filling every hollow between the worn bricks, so that the laughing girls had frequently to leap from one dry spot to another, as they made their arduous progress about the apartment.

It was hot in the lodging, hotter still at Mrs. García's, hottest of all in school, and the temperature appeared to have a baleful effect on the tempers of some of the children, who were as restless as eels in frying-pans and inclined to be somewhat captious and irritable.

Nothing at all has happened since we left Bacanuchi, (Mary had written, as she brought her home journal up to date,) save the interesting proceedings on St. John's Day, June twenty-fourth, and I 've meant ever since to tell you about them.

It seems that at sunrise on that date, the Indians everywhere in Mexico — those who are Christians, I mean — take from their chapels and their huts such images as they possess of St. John the Baptist, who is the most popular saint among them, immerse them in the waters of some running stream, and then solemnly bathe there themselves, taking care to stand directly in the current of the sanctified waters. Padre Romero, the priest here, whom I asked for an explanation of the custom, said that the bathers were thus supposed to be rebaptized each year, or cleansed afresh from all their sins, and that it was really a most beautiful ceremony, when, as in the larger villages, crowds of Indians holding the blessed images came in chanting procession to the streams.

As to the festivities afterward, the priest could give no explanation, unless, he said, they sprang from the joy of the soul, all whose guilt had been washed away. I thought privately there might be a physical as well as a spiritual reason for joy, as many of these people bathe only once in the year, but I did not obtrude

so unpoetic an explanation on the reverend father.

Well, this ceremony was only the beginning of the day, and of course I did n't see that part at all, being wrapped in heretic slumbers. Later on, when I came home from school, — for we had a half-holiday, — the streets were absolutely crowded with riders, both Indians and Mexicans, of the lower classes, and this is what I wanted the priest to explain, — what horseback-riding has to do with St. John. I never heard that he had any connection with horses, did you?

The women were all seated in front of the men, — just the reverse of our old New England custom, you see, — and it looked very picturesque, though perhaps a trifle affectionate for people who are so over-particular and prudish in some other respects.

The woman sits on the saddle, sidewise of course, and the man rides behind her with his right arm round her waist and his left over her shoulder, holding the reins. The Mexicans were in their gayest riding-dress, wide gray and black felt hats with silver cords and tassels, short embroidered riding-jackets, and all the rest of the pretty costume, though none of them could compare for a moment with the beautiful things the K. of R. C. sometimes wears.

The women and girls were dressed as usual, I suppose, for nothing could be seen but rebosos,

but what chattering and laughing, and what gayety there was in the narrow streets as the horses trotted by!

Lucina and I were at our door looking out and enjoying it all, when Don Raimundo drove by with the white horses that brought me here from the mill when I first came; and in a moment Salomé García came running over to say that he had come to take me to drive. What fun, I thought, though it 's odd he did n't call here for me; and I caught up my hat and flew, with Lucina at my heels.

Arrived at Mrs. García's, I found that the way Don Quixote takes Dulcinea to drive in Mexico is to invite her whole family, so we packed in, all of us, Lucina, and Salomé, and Mrs. García, and at least three of the babies. We had a charming time, though, and Don Raimundo was as nice as he could be, and let me drive all the way. Ladies never drive, you know, in this country, so everybody we met stared as if I 'd been walking the tight-rope.

Raimundo has been at the mines since I saw him, and has met Mr. Vazquez, and they cannot return before the last of August, it seems. Of course, it is n't so bad now that I 'm somewhat used to the loneliness, and everybody is very kind, but oh, for a good long English talk with "Miss Barbara" once more!

The K. of R. C. stayed to supper after our

drive, and we had frijoles cooked with Chili pepper, and stewed cheese with a thin, hot sauce poured over it, and dried-meat broth and tamales, and all kinds of magnificence, and as I had a slight headache, Mrs. García ordered tea made for me with stick cinnamon steeped in it. Nobody drinks tea here except as medicine, you know.

You will think the description of the day is never going to end, dear people, but there 's more of it still. There was a grand ball in the evening, and we all went to look on for a while, — no, not quite all, this time, for the babies were put to bed, and Lucina and Salomé stayed at home to study.

It was such a curious ballroom; I wish you could have seen it, Celia, lighted by flaring candles set high up on the walls, the musicians all wrapped in sarapes and playing with their hats on, and half the men smoking, among the lookers-on around the room. There were two sentinels, with long shining rifles, stationed at each door, — I 'm sure I don't know why, unless they 're always expecting a revolution in this country, or unless everybody is so wild to dance that they have to keep unbidden guests away by force of arms.

Ah, yes, and there was one thing more, and such a pretty thing, the "Cascarones."

These are eggshells filled with silver and gold tinsel, and bits of colored paper, and the gen-

tlemen break them over the ladies' heads in the dancing. It 's a charming custom, and the bright, shining particles look very picturesque glittering on the dark hair, but it took me at least three days to get out of my fuzzy locks the " cascaron " Raimundo broke for me.

It was the thin closely written sheets containing this description of St. John's Day that Mary took from her portfolio this warm July afternoon, and while Lucina drowsed in the doorway over her English lesson, and the flies danced tarantellas in the still heat, she read it over, and adding two or three postscripts in girlish fashion, prepared it for the next day's stage.

It was true that nothing had happened since they left the ranch, — nothing, that is, save the tides of thought and feeling that had ebbed and flowed in the little pilgrim's heart.

It was evident enough, as she stood by the table, folding and sealing her letter, that her inner life, at least, had been eventful since she left her home nearly a year ago, for she was decidedly thinner, her rosy tints a trifle paler, and there was a serious, thoughtful look in the deep blue eyes.

In these midsummer days she was torn

day and night by opposing feelings, for Celia had written that her "Francis" was trying to negotiate the sale of the mountain ranch to an English syndicate.

And if he should, oh, if he *should*, Molliekin, (wrote the Princess,) and if he should get the price he 's trying for, it would straighten everything out and leave mother comfortable.

It 's almost too good to be hoped for, but if it *does* happen, we 'll wire you the news, no matter if they have to send a mounted messenger with it all the way from Tontin, and then! ! then, you dear, patient, precious, hard-working darling, you will pitch your clothes into your trunk, and ride, RIDE, RIDE, for your life and Corona.

Mary had trembled to her finger-tips as she read the excited note, and had felt as if she were already on horseback, galloping home, but in a moment had come the thought of her children, for whom she hoped so much. Must they be left to the dull monotony of ignorant lives, with no one to guide them up the steeps of knowledge? . . . And yet, on the other hand, there was aunt Ellen. If Celia married, was not Mary's first and highest duty to her second mother, "the angel of her infant life"? . . . True, but there was Lucina, and

— and other friends in Sonora. How could she leave them all? . . . Could she not, — oh, there was the solution, — could she not come back again and persuade aunt Ellen to come, too, for a while? Now that she knew the drawbacks of living down here, she could bring enough from home to make even a sick person comfortable, and the change, of course, would do her worlds of good. Did n't they always prescribe change of scene for invalids?

"Lucina," she cried, turning to the doorway, "if I should go away, how wouldst thou like" —

"Meh-ree," interrupted Lucina, "I will *not* have you keep saying 'if I should go away. I cannot bear it. If lightning is going to strike me, I don't see the advantage of being told of it beforehand. I 'm not going to talk about it, I 'm not going to *think* about it, and if you loved me a single bit," pouting, "you 'd stop writing those everlasting letters, and let me speak to you once in a while."

"Dear, dear! what a firebrand it is!" cried Mary, running to the door. "Come, then, thou little spoiled one, what dost thou say? Shall we go to the vineyard?"

Now the time, as the Scripture says, "was the time of the first ripe grapes," and as they were unusually luscious that season, the favorite walk of the girls was in their direction.

They sallied out now, hand in hand, talking and laughing, for the sun of youth shone too bright to be long clouded, and by and by "they came unto the vineyard," and by the payment of a medio (two cents and a half) they were allowed to cut as many grapes as they chose, and, having forgotten their basket, they hung them on a stick and carried the burden thus between them.

"We look just like the spies that Moses sent into Canaan, coming back from the brook Eshcol," laughed Mary. "There was a picture of it I always used to like, in our old Bible at home, and it says underneath, 'They cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between them upon a staff.'"

"It must have been a very fertile country," commented Lucina, "if those were wild grapes. Let us pass my cousin's door, as we go home, shall we? and give the children some fruit, and then we can see if Panchita will take us to the Fiesta to-night.

You know you never have seen 'la gente baja'[1] dance, and I know you would enjoy it, Mehree of my heart."

Mr. and Mrs. García welcomed the idea of going to the Fiesta, and in the summer dusk they all set off together, Mary bareheaded and without a wrap, and Doña Panchita with her reboso slightly loosened, as a concession to the extreme heat.

It was a picturesque sight that met their eyes as they turned into the open square where the Fiesta was in progress. In the centre stood a pavilion, its supports, trees just brought from the woods with the bark still on, and its roof, green boughs that danced with the thrill of the dancing below. All about the square, stalls, lighted by candles with their star-like points of flame, were set for the sale of cakes and sweetmeats, and to and fro among them moved a throng of dark figures.

This being a case where to do as the Romans do is the highest courtesy, the Americanita seated herself on the ground with her friends, and, eating peanuts and cactus sweetmeats, watched with admiration the dancers in the green pavilion. The music

[1] The common people, or lower orders.

was decidedly inferior, merely what is called a "rawhide band" in Arizona, but the dancing was never excelled and rarely equaled by the trained performers of any European court. There was complete absence of ceremony, — "Willy had his Jane, and Johnny had got his Joan," and all were "tripping, tripping, tripping up and down," with the beat of the music in their feet, and the keen, savage joy of rhythmic motion in their veins.

The men all wore the white cotton blouse and trousers of the country, in every stage of dirt, semi-dirt, and cleanliness; all kept their broad-brimmed straw hats on, and most of them puffed cigarritos while dancing.

Their partners, whom they beckoned from the crowd of women with bended finger, exactly as one does in "Puss in the Corner," were gowned as usual in long, trailing calicoes, some of which were soiled and greasy, just as they came from the kitchen. There was only one maiden who had attempted adornment, and she was arrayed in a yellow muslin with streamers of green ribbon, and wore a bunch of red paper roses in her dark hair, but as she danced no better than the

Cinderellas, she seemed to receive no more attention than they.

Waltzes, polkas, quadrilles, and "danzas" followed each other in rapid succession as they watched, and in none of the dances requiring concerted action was a single direction given, the performers swinging through the various elaborate figures with perfect grace and ease, and as serenely as the stars move in their long-accustomed courses.

"It is perfectly marvelous," said Mary, at the end of the evening, yawning a little as they bade adieu to the Garcías and turned toward their room, — "it is perfectly marvelous how thy people dance, Lucina; "it must be in the blood, like the sing— Dear me! what *is* this?" stumbling over an obstruction at the threshold.

"This" proved to be the washerwoman, seated sphinx-like and immovable on the sidewalk, her bundle of clothes by her side, apparently resolved to wait for their return until morning, if necessary.

"Why, señora," cried Mary, recognizing her, "did I hurt you? Why in the world did you not speak?"

"I believed the ladies would see me, and

I did not desire to cry out rudely. Since long ago, I have been here awaiting them."

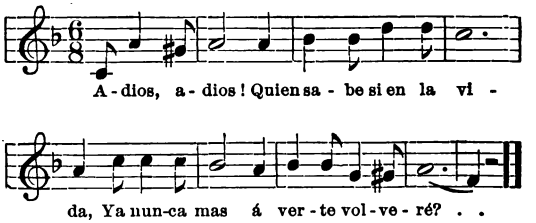
"But it was absurd to stay all this time," expostulated Mary. "Why did you not call the landlady, or go away and come back again to-morrow? It is not worth while to be so patient, señora, — Good-night, then," — receiving the bundle,— "Many thanks."

"Lucina," said the girl gravely, as she turned the heavy key in the door and wedged the long pole in place, "I was going to say, querida mia,[1] that thy people excelled all others in dancing, but I am not sure, on the whole, that their chief accomplishment is not sitting still and waiting."

[1] My loved one.

CHAPTER XIX.

"ADIOS! HASTA LA VISTA!"



It was a September dawn, so early that the great oblong of the open window hardly yet glimmered out from the soft darkness, but early as it was, a low, continuous murmur of prayer showed that Mary's landlady, "Doña Madrugadita," [1] as the neighors called her, was already kneeling at her beads in the adjoining room.

Early as it was, too, the blue eyes of her lodger were wide and wakeful, as they had been through all the hours of the night; for the final decision had been made, this chapter of life was closed, and the hand of the

[1] Madam Early-riser

Recording Angel was already lifted to turn the page.

A month ago the wires had flashed the news of the momentous sale of the ranch, and aunt Ellen's message, "Come home, my child, at once!" and it spoke well for the heroic blood of Mary's ancestors that she had let four weeks pass by while she found out the exact condition of things at Glen Ellen, assured herself that Celia's impending marriage rendered her presence there absolutely necessary, and made such arrangements as were in her power for the continuance of the school so loved, so worked for, and so appreciated.

Mrs. Mason, who had been in New England for her boy's Commencement, and after a round of family visits was safely at home again, openly exulted in the girl's prospective departure, and willingly agreed to find in Tontin a teacher for the precious school, since that was the absolute condition of Mary's leaving.

"I will find somebody," she wrote, "buy somebody, or *make* somebody, if necessary, so long as I can set you on the way to your home (which, it may be observed, a chick like you should never have left), and get a

peep at you en route. I don't expect to secure an enchantress, whom the children will call 'Adored little mistress,' 'Rose of Castile,' and 'Beloved One,' as I understand they do you, you witch, but I know I can get a trusty, sensible, well-educated woman, with a heart for her work, and an eye to the favorable business opening down there."

She had been as good as her word, and Mrs. Johnson, a grave, sweet-faced young widow, bringing sheaves of certificates and recommendations in her hands, was already established in temporary lodgings in Ceritas, pending the arrival of the Vazquez family next month.

Her only drawback seemed to be her comparatively slight knowledge of Spanish, but Mary reflected, as she reviewed the situation for the last time this morning, that, perhaps, this was not so much of a drawback after all, now that the children were well advanced in English, and that it might prove by and by to be a virtue rather than a defect.

As the familiar objects in the room outlined themselves in the growing light, she rose softly on her elbow to see if Lucina were awake. No, there she lay, breathing softly, her lips slightly parted, her black

lashes a crescent of shadow on her creamy cheek, and her long braids sweeping the pillow. One of the sharpest pangs of parting had been providentially averted here, for if Mary should not be able to return next spring, as she now fondly hoped to do, Doña Rosita had solemnly promised to send Lucina on a long visit to Corona at that time, or so soon as suitable escort could be found.

The promise had been as balm to the girl's yearning heart, and since then she had been quiet and helpful, — now, as ever, the most faithful of friends and best of assistants.

"Who would have thought," mused Mary, as she looked around with a laugh and a sob mounting together in her throat, "that this den would ever have grown lovable to me, that I should look with affection on these smeared walls, these worm-eaten beams, and this worn-out floor, and that I should positively want to cry, when a whiff from 'Araby the Blest' came to my nose? How strangely, how strangely, we are made! A year ago, I was half breaking my heart because I had to come here, and now the poor heart is aching so that I can hardly bear it because I must go to-day."

The sun had fairly risen now, and its golden beams shining through chink of door and open window showed the traveler's small trunk all corded for the journey, and her guitar-case, portmanteau, and wraps lying beside it. The humble lodging had never boasted many adornments, but all had vanished now, the wall-roll with its illuminated texts having been presented to Lucina, as well as Celia's painting of "Old Maids' Hall," whose lofty towers gave Mary a sharp pang every time she saw them under the altered condition of affairs.

Poor little Cármen Cavazos, whose sufferings under the approaching departure were really painful to witness, had been somewhat consoled by the gift of her beloved's devotional books and her portfolio, while Don Raimundo, dropping in one evening with Mrs. García, had, while that amiable lady's back was turned, quietly pocketed everything on the table. It was not altogether larceny, for he had given an interrogative glance at Mary as he did so, and she, half touched, half laughing, had watched him as he stowed away her quill pen, her worn copy of Emerson's essays, and the red Japanese silk scarf that had so long adorned

her hat. The exchange might have been called a fair one, perhaps, with a considerable balance on Mary's side, for the books he had last lent her, "Don Quixote," Espronceda's poems, and a volume of Fernan Caballero's stories, were lying in her trunk, with his full name, Raimundo Altamirano é Ylarregui, and an inimitable flourish beneath, written in every one of them. He had refused to take them back when they were proffered, and setting her name above his own, had said in his extravagantly courteous way that they were far too costly for his possession, now that she had used them.

She was pondering all these things in her heart, her hand shading her tired eyes from the bright sun, when one of his shining arrows suddenly aroused Lucina.

"A—y!" sighed the girl, stretching her arms above her head, "what dreams I have had and with what a heaviness I waken! It is the day, at last, is it not, Meh-ree darling?" — the fond word in English now. "Would that the dawn had been less prompt to come! And ah, there thou hast another packet of letters under the door. Do not rise, I will bring them to thee."

In a moment she dropped the letters at Mary's side, — a half dozen of them, addressed, some in round, childish hands, some in scrawling, almost babyish letters, some in spider-like chirography, — and after one of her impetuous, bear-like embraces proceeded with her dressing, glancing tenderly now and then, as she moved about the room, at the expressive April face on the white pillow.

The letters were a last tribute from some of the disconsolate children, — they had all written her at least a dozen apiece since they knew of her departure, — and she had found them from day to day under her pillow, on her table, slipped under the door, lying where they had been tossed through the window, and even tucked into the pocket of her school dress. So sweet they were, so tender, so youthful in sentiment, and yet couched always in the formal Spanish style that seems to sit so heavily on childish shoulders.

Her naughty boys, Lauro Martinez and Pedro Rosales, had each written a pathetic, ill-spelled note this morning, supplicating that she would forgive the evil of their behavior in the past; Delfina Quiroga sent a

tender letter beginning, "My much beloved and appreciated Miss Mariquita;" Pascual Salazar wrote that in all the schools he had ever attended he had never had "so amiable, so wise, so sympathetic, nor so gracious a teacher," and that she could "never, never be forgotten;" Teresa Caraveo sent an absolute wail of despair very much blotted, protesting that the new lady could never be one half so dear nor so lovely as her "adored Miss Mary," and begging for a letter from her that she might "treasure it all her life," and lastly, here was another letter — certainly the twentieth — from Cármen Cavazos.

Mary laughed over this, then choked, and finally broke down altogether in Lucina's encircling arms, sobbing that she should never have the courage to leave Ceritas if that child sent her another line.

It was written in scrawling, irregular characters, with a deplorable lack of capitals and a highly original system of punctuation, but it was touching enough to one who knew the girl.

My beloved Preceptress (it ran), —

Since the hour when you gave me the sad notice of your departure my heart is full of a

just sentiment all that I see causes me sadness I think only of the deplorable day you must leave us and of how brief a time endured the pleasure of your amiable company; no consolation remains to me but tears though I do not lose the precious hope of seeing you again as you promised: God be thanked that I may have this joy now that I have no longer the happiness of learning sweet maxims from your appreciated lips

adored Miss Mary do not forget us we shall forever be sad in your absence I can never forget you never never never my heart will always mourn for my sweetest and dearest

Receive that heart full of sorrow and sentiment

CARMEN CAVAZOS

Poor Mary, already worn out with the sorrows of parting, was tucking these last precious letters into her bag when Vicente and Faustino, hand in hand, supporting each other, came, solemn as mutes at a funeral, to call her to breakfast. Their demeanor was so unlike anything the mercurial little fellows had ever displayed before that it was absolutely startling, and Mary was obliged to kneel on the threshold, and hugging them both, cry, "Do, dear boys, try

to cheer up a bit! You are breaking my heart. You know I must go, but I will come back, I will indeed."

"Luckless Mrs. Johnson," she thought, as for the last time she hurried to the morning meal; "she 'll suffer next week, poor woman, until the children recover a little from this parting."

Breakfast dispatched, she bade adieu to kind Mr. García, to the servants, and to as many of the children as could hastily be collected, and then, closely shadowed by Lucina and her brothers, and escorted by Doña Panchita and the two older children, she returned to her room to wait for the stage.

"It is strange Raimundo has not been here this morning," murmured Doña Panchita, pausing in the doorway as she looked up and down the street.

"No," answered Mary from her perch on the trunk where she sat surrounded by children; "you know he told us last night that he does not believe in good-byes, and," with a quiver in her voice, "I saw him at my window afterwards. . . . Oh, *is* that the stage so soon?" as a rattling and clattering was heard on the stony street.

It was indeed that vehicle of fate, and in all its trips since the day it was built, it could never have been received before with such a concerted and unanimous wail of sorrow as burst on its approach from every childish throat in the throng about the door. The rough driver looked about him in amazement as he tossed the shabby trunk into place, and he climbed to his seat, his dark features still fixed in a wondering stare.

"Good-by, dear Doña Panchita," cried Mary, falling on the breast of that weeping matron. "You have been so good to me. Good-by, my dearest, darling, dearest little Lucina," emphasizing each word with tearful kisses, "we shall see each other soon, you know; good-by, my precious children — yes, Miss Mary will come back, she *will* come back indeed. Carmencita mia, do not cry so, sweet child! . . . Yes, you may bring the guitar, boys, and my bag," and she stumbled up the steps of the stage and fell into her seat half-blinded by tears.

The driver cracked his whip, the wheels began to turn, when "Stop, stop!" cried all the children at once, and round the corner, at full speed, came Pedro and Lauro, the two naughty boys, bearing between them

an immense wicker cage, a cardinal bird fluttering behind its bars.

"It is for you," they cried; "it is for you to take to California, and do forgive us, dear Mees Meh-ree!"

"Forgive you!" cried the girl, now a weeping Niobe indeed. "Why, you have been as good as angels for weeks past. Thank you a thousand times, dear boys. I shall love the bird. Good-by, good-by."

The stage rolled away with its solitary passenger, for the La Fleurs, who were also going to Tontin, were not to be taken up until the mill was reached, and Mary looked back until the last minute to catch a parting glimpse of Lucina, to wave her hand to the washerwoman, to old Don Alberto, who was taking his morning constitutional, to Mrs. Johnson, who stood at her window, and to the priest, who chatted on a corner with Señor Cavazos.

"It is all over at last," she thought, as they crossed the Alameda. "All the good-byes are said now," but as she leaned back exhausted with emotion, there was a glint of silver, a rattle of spurs and chains, a clatter of rapid hoofs, and the Knight of the Rueful Countenance reined in his horse beside her.

"Good-morning, Mariquita," he said, with a sweep of the broad gray hat with its silver tassels. "I am come to escort you as far as Las Flores, with your permission."

Mary raised her small, tear-stained face to the grave dark eyes looking down upon her. "Thank you, Raimundo," she said, with a little catch in her breath, "I shall be very glad, — I am so tired, and sad — and lonely."

"Poor little one, thou hast suffered much, and there is a hard journey before thee," he murmured with a compassionate glance. "I am rejoiced that a suitable escort is provided for thee from Tontin," he added, seeming not to notice that he had dropped the formal "you" in these last phrases. "Now do not try to talk; repose thyself for a little."

He only dropped an occasional word himself, as Favorito cantered along by the rickety vehicle, for silence was always golden with Señor Don Raimundo Altamirano é Ylarregui, but his very silence had something soothing about it, thought Mary, and an atmosphere of comfort and protection seemed to radiate from his presence to-day as she recognized with a quick heart-throb

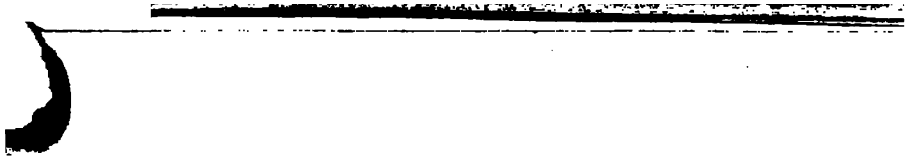
what the soft "thou" meant from the lips of this knight of hers.

As they climbed the slope to the mill, rustling through grasses and flowers waving high above the wheels, Raimundo, with a word of command to the driver, suddenly reined in his horse.

"I must go, Mariquita," he said simply, as he bent to the window.

"Good-by, then," faltered the girl, as she shyly gave him her hand, the tears rushing swift again into the blue eyes.

"Not good-by, Mariquita, — that is not a word I favor," he murmured, as he bent over her fingers. "Hasta la vista,[1] let us say; that suits better with my mood and with my purpose, sweetest friend of mine. Hasta la vista, pues, hasta" — Favorito gave a sudden bound as the spurs touched his velvet flanks, the stage creaked on up the hill, and Mary, leaning out into the sunshine, watched the stately rider galloping back, — galloping back into his country as she rode forward to her own.

[1] Au revoir.

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